GIAMBATTISTA VICO

NEW SCIENCE

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW SCIENCE
CONCERNING THE COMMON NATURE OF NATIONS

THIRD EDITION
THOROUGHLY CORRECTED, REVISED, AND
EXPANDED BY THE AUTHOR

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PENGUIN BOOKS
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IDEA OF THE WORK

Explanation of the Frontispiece Illustration which Introduces the Work

[1] Just as Cebes the Theban once made a Tablet of things moral, so I present here a Tableau of civil institutions. Before reading my work, you may use this tableau to form an idea of my New Science. And after reading it, you will find that this tableau aids your imagination in retaining my work in your memory.

[2] The woman with winged temples who stands on the celestial globe, meaning the world of nature, is Metaphysics: for her name in fact means 'above nature'. The radiant triangle with the seeing eye is God, shown in his manifestation as providence. In her state of ecstasy, Metaphysics contemplates God above the order of natural institutions, through which philosophers have previously contemplated him. In other words, Metaphysics in this work ascends higher and contemplates in God the world of human minds, which we call the metaphysical world. Metaphysics thus seeks to demonstrate God's providence in the world of the human spirit, which we call the civil world or the world of nations.

In the lower part of the picture are represented various hieroglyphs symbolizing the institutions which are the basic elements of the civil world. The globe, which represents the physical or natural world, rests on only one point of the altar. This means that previously the

* From the outset, Vico constantly plays upon the ambiguity of Latinate vocabulary: tableau means a table, tables, or tableau; and one, 'thing' (like Latin re), often means an institution. The so-called Table of Cebes is a first-century Greek dialogue in which an allegorical painting about human morality is described and analysed.
philosophers have contemplated and demonstrated divine providence only through the natural order, in which God is conceived as an eternal Mind who is the free and absolute sovereign of nature. To this God, humankind offers its worship, sacrifices, and other divine honours, because his eternal counsel naturally grants and preserves our existence. But no philosopher has yet contemplated God's providence under humankind's most characteristic property, which is its essentially social nature.

Since original sin caused people to fall from a state of perfect justice, human intentions and actions generally follow different and even contrary paths. If people were left to pursue their private interests, they would live in solitude like wild beasts. But by His providential care, God ordered and arranged human institutions so that this same self-interested life, even through these different and contrary ways, to live with justice like human beings and to remain in society. In my New Science, I shall show that this social nature is the true civil nature of humankind, and that this law exists in nature. This role of divine providence is the first aspect, my work becomes a rational civil theology of divine providence.

3] In the Zodiac belt circling the celestial globe, only the signs of Leo and Virgo, and no others, appear full-face or in what is called front view.

The figure of Leo means that the principles of my New Science begin by contemplating Hercules, who is the archetype of the founder of human culture. And it contemplates him as he performs his greatest labour, the slaying of the Nemean lion. (Spewing forth flames, this beast set fire to the Nemean forest. When Hercules killed it, he donned its skin as a trophy and ascended to the stars. As we shall see, this lion represents the great ancient forest of the earth, which was burned off and placed under cultivation by Hercules, who is also the archetype of the political heroes, who in fact came before the better-known warrior heroes.) Leo further marks the starting point of human chronology. For the Greeks, who are the source for all our knowledge of pagan antiquities, reckoned their Olympiads from the first Olympic games, which Hercules founded when he instituted the Nemean games to celebrate his victory in slaying the lion. In this way, the chronology of the Greeks begins with the introduction of agriculture among them.

As for Virgo, the astronomers adopted the poets' description of the goddess as crowned with ears of grain. This means that Greek history began in the Golden Age, which the poets clearly celebrate as the work's first age. Indeed, for many centuries were reckoned according to the harvests of grain, which was the world's first 'gold'. The Greeks' Golden Age corresponds exactly to the Latin's Age of Saturn, a god whose name comes from satus, sowing. During this Golden Age, the gods mingled with heroes on earth, as the ancient poets faithfully record. As we shall see, the earliest pagans, being simple and uncouth folk, were deceived by the fearful superstitions created by their vigorous imaginations, and so truly believed that they saw gods on earth. And we shall see that the Near Eastern peoples, Egyptians, Greeks, and Latinus - while unaware of each other's existence - all shared uniform ideas which led them to elevate their gods to planets and their heroes to fixed stars. Thus from Saturn, whom the Greeks call Kronos or Chronos (meaning 'time'), we derive further basic principles of chronology, the science of time-reckoning.

4] You must not think it improper that the altar stands beneath the celestial globe and supports it. As we shall see, the world's first altars were raised by the pagans in the primitive, earthbound heaven sung by the ancient poets, whose myths faithfully record the tradition that Heaven once ruled on earth and bestowed great benefits on the human race. As the children of the new-born human race, the first people believed that the sky was no higher than their mountain heights, just as children today think it no higher than the rooftops. Later, as the Greek mind developed, altars were erected on the summits of the highest mountains, such as Olympus, which is where Homer says that the gods dwell in his day. Eventually, Heaven was raised above the celestial spheres as described by today's astronomers, and Olympus was raised above the firmament of stars. At the same time, the altar was carried up into heaven, where it forms the constellation Ara. The fire on the altar passed into the neighbouring house of Leo, which you see

\* Vico's *canone*, character or sign, is best rendered as 'archetype'.
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in the picture. (This sign symbolizes the Nemean forest which Hercules burned off to place the land under cultivation.) And as a trophy of Hercules' deed, the lion's skin was raised up to the stars.

[5] The ray of divine providence, which illuminates the convex jewel adorning the breast of Metaphysics, signifies that metaphysics must have a clean and pure heart. (Metaphysics must neither be tainted by pride of spirit, nor soiled by the baseness of physical pleasures. Pride led Zeno to teach fate as his first principle, and pleasure led Epicurus to teach chance; and both denied divine providence.) The jewel also signifies that the knowledge of God must not end in the metaphysics of previous philosophers, who merely sought the private illumination of intellectual virtues as a guide to their personal morality. Such metaphysics would have been represented by a flat jewel. Instead, the jewel in my picture is convex, so that the rays of providence are reflected and refracted outwards. In this way, metaphysics recognizes God's providence in public moral institutions, meaning those civil customs by which nations arise and are perpetuated in the world.

[6] The ray of providence is reflected from the breast of Metaphysics to the statue of Homer, who is the earliest pagan author to come down to us. For metaphysics has its origins in the history of human ideas, beginning with humankind's very first civilized thoughts. With the aid of metaphysics, I have finally been able to descend into the confused minds of the first founders of the pagan nations, which were filled with vivid sensations and unbounded fancies. Such people had only a dull and dim-witted capacity for applying their human reason. And so we find that the origins of poetry not only differ from, but even contradict all our previous conceptions. For they spring from the origins of poetic wisdom, which were previously obscure for the same reasons. This poetic wisdom was the knowledge of the theological poets, and was undoubtedly the world's first wisdom among the pagans. The statue of Homer standing on a broken pedestal signifies my discovery of the true Homer. (This discovery, which I sensed but did not fully comprehend in the first edition of my New Science, is here fully worked out and explained.) Our previous ignorance of the true Homer kept hidden from us the true origins and institutions of the nations in three ages: (1) the mythical age; (2) the dark age, which all have despaired of knowing; and (3) the historical age. These are the three ages of history described by Marcus Terentius Varro, the greatest scholar of Roman antiquities, in his great work, now lost, titled Divine and Human Institutions.

[7] In addition, I note that my work employs a new form of criticism, which was previously lacking, in seeking to establish the truth about the founders of the pagan nations. For these founders in fact lived more than a thousand years before those writers with whom previous criticism has dealt. In my Science, philosophy undertakes to examine philology. (By philology, I mean the science of everything that depends on human volition: for example, all histories of the languages, customs, and deeds of various peoples in both war and peace.) Previously, philosophy has had almost a horror of discussing questions of philology, since they involve lamentably obscure causes and infinitely diverse effects. But here philosophy reduces philology to the form of a science, discovering in it the outlines of an ideal eternal history, along which the histories of all nations pass in time. Viewed under this principal aspect, my New Science becomes a philosophy of human 'authority', a term I shall explain later. And by discovering new principles of poetry, which in turn reveal new principles of mythology, I show that the Greek myths were true and rigorous histories of the customs of the most ancient peoples of Greece.

First came the myths of the gods, which were histories from the cruelest age of pagan civilization, when people believed that all institutions necessary or useful to humankind were deities. The authors of this poetry were the first peoples, who were all theological poets; and tradition relates unequivocally that they founded the pagan nations through their myths of the gods. We shall have occasion to apply the principles of my new criticism to the origin of the pagan gods. For we shall ponder the specific times and particular occasions when the first pagans conceived of institutions necessary or useful to humankind, and which gods they variously imagined then, inspired by the fearful religions which they themselves had invented and embraced. This natural theology, or genealogy of the gods, arose naturally in the minds of the earliest people, and thus provides a rational chronology for the poetic history of the gods.
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Second came the heroic myths, which were the true histories of the heroes and heroic customs which have flourished in every nation during the age of its barbarism. Homer's two epics prove to be two treasuries, in which we may discover the natural law of the Greeks when they were still a barbarous people. My New Science shows that among the Greeks this period lasted until the age of Herodotus. Now, although Herodotus is called the father of Greek history, his books are for the most part filled with myths, and his style contains many Homeric elements. Indeed, this trait persists in later Greek historians, who employ a style that is midway between the poetic and the prosaic. By contrast, Thucydides, who is the first serious and rigorous historian of Greece, admits in the introduction to his history that until his father's day—which was the generation of Herodotus, who was old when Thucydides was a boy—the Greeks knew absolutely nothing about their own antiquities, much less those of other peoples! (And, with the exception of the Romans, today we can only know about these ancient peoples of the Greeks.) These antiquities are the dense darkness shown in the background of the frontispiece. But as Metaphysics reflects the ray of divine providence on the figure of Homer, from this darkness there emerge into the light all the symbols that represent the basic principles of this world of nations—principles which were previously known only by their effects.

8 Among these symbols, the altar appears most prominently. For the civil world of all peoples begins with religion.

On top of the altar and to the left, there first appears a latus, which is the divining wand that Roman augurs used in taking auguries and observing omens. It symbolizes divination, which among all pagan peoples was the origin of their first divine institutions. For all ancient peoples recognized God's providence. The Jews recognized God's true providence, and believed that God is an infinite Mind who beholds all providence, and from this revealed future events to His people by Himself, through His angels (who are also minds), or through the prophets, to whose minds He spoke. By contrast, the pagans embraced an imaginary providence, for they fancied the gods as physical bodies which foretold the future by signs apparent to the senses. But whether true or imaginary, this attribute of providence led the entire human race to call God's nature 'divinity'. They all derived this name from one and the same notion, which in Latin was called divinari, to foretell the future. But we must bear in mind the basic distinction I just made between Jews and pagans. From it derive all the other essential differences, explained in my New Science, which distinguish the natural law of the Jews from the natural law of the pagan nations.

Now, Roman jurists defined this second kind of natural law as something which divine providence had ordained together with the human customs of civilization. Hence, the divining wand also denotes the origin of the universal history of the pagans, which began with the universal flood, as physical and historical evidence proves. Mythology relates that two centuries after the flood Heaven (Uranus in Greek) reigned on earth and bestowed numerous great benefits on mankind. At that time, the Near Eastern peoples, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and other pagan nations shared uniform ideas which caused them to develop parallel religions, all based on their various Jupiters. For at that time, 200 years after the flood, the heavens were filled with thunder and lightning, and each race began to read in this thunder and lightning the omens of its own Jupiter. (This existence of multiple Jupiters—what accounts for the Egyptians calling their Jupiter Ammon the most ancient of them all—was previously a source of amazement to philologists and historians.) As we shall see, the same physical and historical evidence proves that the religion of the Jews is more ancient than the religions on which the pagan nations were founded, and thus confirms the truth of the Christian religion.

10 On the altar next to the divining wand, we see a fire and a pitcher of water, the elements required in divination sacrifices. Among the pagans these sacrifices originated in that custom which the Romans called procuring the auspices, prooare auspicias. This meant offering a sacrifice in order to interpret the omens properly, so that the divine admonitions, or Jupiter's commands, could be properly carried out.

* By *fideologi* 'philologists', Vico often means the scholars we now call 'historians'. For Vico, philology is the study of historical cultures, as philosophy is the study of eternal ideas.
Such rites were the pagans' divine institutions, from which their human institutions later arose.

[11] The first of these human institutions was marriage, which is here represented by a torch, lit at the altar fire and supported by the pitcher of water. As all political thinkers agree, marriage is the seed-bed of the family, just as the family is the seed-bed of the commonwealth. To signify this, the marriage torch, while symbolizing a human rite, is placed on the altar between the water and the fire, which are symbols of divine rites. In precisely this way, the ancient Romans celebrated nuptials with water and fire, *aqua et igni*. For they saw that it was by divine counsel that these two common elements had led people to live in society. (Even before the discovery of fire, society was made possible by perennial sources of water, which is more essential to life than fire.)

[12] The second human institution is burial. In Latin, it was the verb *humare*, to bury, which gave the primary and proper meaning to the noun *humanitas*, human civilization. Burial is represented by a funerary urn placed to one side in the forest. This means that burials date from the age when mankind fed on fruit in the summer, and acorns in the winter. Inscribed on the urn are the initials D.M., which stand for the Latin *Di Manibus*, to the Div Manes, meaning the good souls of the buried dead. This phrase refers to the belief that people's souls do not die with their bodies, but are immortal—a notion which was first approved by the common consensus of all mankind, and later demonstrated by Plato.

[13] The urn also alludes to the origin of the pagans' division of their fields, which we may view as the origin of the later distinctions between cities, peoples, and ultimately nations.

Long ago, Noah's three sons renounced their father's religion, which by its rite of marriage was the only thing that preserved the society of families in that state of nature. There followed a period of brutal wandering or migration, in which first Ham's tribes, then Japheth's, and finally Shem's, were all scattered throughout the earth's great forest. Pursuing shy and intractable women, fleeing the wild animals which were so abundant in the great primeval forest, and searching for pasture and water, they were after many years so widely scattered that their condition was reduced to that of brutes. Then, on certain occasions

ordained by divine providence, described in my New Science, they were shaken and roused by a terrible fear of Uranus and Jupiter, the gods they had invented and embraced. Some of them now finally stopped wandering and took shelter in certain places. Here they settled down with certain women. And in their fear of the deities they perceived, they celebrated marriages, engaging secretly in religious and chaste carnal unions. In this way, they founded families by bearing certain children.

Through protracted settlement and the burial of their ancestors, they came to find and divide the first dominions of the earth. The lords of these domains were called giants, a Greek word which means 'sons of the earth', or descendants of the buried dead. These lords were considered paticcians or nobles: for in this first stage of human civilization, nobility was justly ascribed to those who had been *humanely* engendered in fear of divinity. Indeed, it was this 'human generation' which gave rise to the expression *humanum genus*, or human race. Then, as various houses branched out into numerous families, this same notion of engendering caused them to be called the first *gentes*, clans, or peoples. (We shall see that sciences must begin at the point when their subject matter begins. Hence, since the subject of the natural law of nations, *ius naturale gentium*, begins at this remote point of antiquity, so too must our doctrine of natural law, which constitutes a third basic principle of my New Science.) Now, there are physical and ethical reasons, not to mention historical authorities, which show that these early giants were endowed with enormous strength and stature. By contrast, believers in the true God—who created the world and Adam, founder of the human race—were unaffected by these reasons. This is why, from the world's creation, the Jews possessed the proper human proportions.

The funeral urn thus gives us the third of the three principles which my New Science adopts in discussing the origins of countless institutions. These principles are (1) divine providence; (2) solemn matrimoniy; and (3) the universal belief in the immortality of the soul, which originated with burial rites.

[14] A plough emerges from the forest where the urn is placed. It signifies that the fathers of the early pagan peoples were history's first strongmen, or men of fortitude. They are the Herculean founders of
are in turn represented by the rudder bending at the altar’s base. We shall see that it was on this natural superiority that the heroes based the law and science of divine rites (the auspices), and hence their control of them.

[16] The plough shows only the tip of its share, but hides its curved blade, or mouldboard. (Before the use of iron was known, the mouldboard must have been a curved piece of wood hard enough to break and turn the soil.) The Latin word for mouldboard is urbic, from which derives early Latin urbicum, curved. The mouldboard is hidden to signify that the first cities, urbices, which were all founded in cultivated fields, arose only after families had spent many years withdrawn and hidden deep amid the sacred terrors of their hallowed groves. Such groves are found in all the pagan nations of antiquity; and by an idea common to them all, a grove was called lacus in Latin, meaning the ‘land burned off within a wooded enclosure’. In the Bible, we read that, wherever God’s people extended their conquests over other peoples, Moses commanded them to ‘burn their groves with fire’. In this way, he obeyed the counsel of divine providence, which prohibited newly civilized peoples from mingling with nomads, who still persisted in abominable promiscuity by sharing their possessions and their women.

[17] To the left of the altar we see a rudder, which signifies that the migration of peoples originated with seafaring. By seeming to bend before the altar, the rudder represents the suppliant ancestors of those who later led these migrations.

Now, these ancestors were at first impious people, since they recognized no divinity. They were abominable, since without marriages they could not distinguish kinships: sons often slept with mothers, and fathers with daughters. And they were solitary, since their infamous sharing of all things made them like wild beasts ignorant of society. This made them weak, and hence miserable and unhappy: for they lacked all the goods which are necessary for making life secure. At length, they sought to flee the hardships they suffered as a result of quarrels provoked by their brutish sharing. Seeking safety and survival, they took refuge in the lands cultivated by the people who were pious, chaste, strong, and even powerful, because they had already united in families.

From such lands, cities everywhere in pagan antiquity were called
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(1) cities, where people dwell safe from violence and injustice;
(4) jurisdictions, which are exercised within their own territories;
(5) expansions of empires, which are attained through justice, fortitude, and magnanimity, the most glorious virtues of rulers and states;
(6) coats-of-arms, whose first fields-of-arms were the first seed-fields;
(7) fame, from which family servants take their name; and glory, which always consists in aiding humankind;
(8) true nobility, which naturally stems from practising the moral virtues;

(9) true heroism, which lies in conquering the proud and aiding the oppressed, a virtue in which the Roman people surpassed all others and so became masters of the world; and, finally,
(10) war and peace, which first began with wars of self-defence, in which true fortitude consists.

In all these origins, we discern the eternal plan of commonwealths, to which all states must conform if they are to endure, even those acquired by violence and fraud. (Conversely, even commonwealths created by virtuous origins may later collapse through force and fraud.) This plan of commonwealths is based on the two eternal principles basic to our world of nations, namely, the mind and the body of the persons who make up the nations. Each person is composed of these two parts; and the mind, being noble, ought to command, while the body, being vile, ought to serve. But human nature is corrupt, and without the aid of philosophy, which assists only a very few, the vast majority of people cannot individually make their minds command their bodies, rather than serve them. Hence, divine providence organized human society according to the eternal order that, in commonwealths, men who use their minds command, while those who use their bodies obey.

From this event springs the origin of several institutions, like branches growing from a single trunk:
(1) refuges;
(2) families, which form the basis of cities;
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of the ancient Greeks; and below, the later alphabet which we still use.
The alphabet represents the origin of what we call the vernacular languages and letters. We find that these arose many years after the founding of the nations, and letters much later than languages. To represent this, the tablet rests on a fragment of a Corinthian column, which is the most recent architectural order.

[22] The tablet lies quite close to the plough and rather far from the rudder. This represents the origin of native languages, each of which was formed in its own land, where the founders of nations finally chanced to settle, ending the brutish wandering that had scattered and dispersed them through the earth's great forest. Many years later, these native languages mixed with the Near Eastern, Egyptian, and Greek languages along the shores of the Mediterranean and the ocean, as a result of the migrations of peoples I have just described. We find here new principles of etymology, amply illustrated throughout my Science, which allow us to distinguish the origins of native words from those of clearly foreign origin. The distinction is an important one. For the etymologies of native words contain the history of the things they signify following a natural order of ideas. (Thus, at first there were forests, then cultivated fields and huts, next small houses and villages, thence cities, and at last academies and philosophers. This is the order of all progress from its first origins.) By contrast, foreign etymologies merely record the history of words borrowed by one language from another.

[23] The tablet shows only the beginning of the alphabets, and lies facing the statue of Homer. For Greek tradition tells us that the Greek letters were not all invented at one time. And we must conclude that at least in Homer's day they had not all been invented, for it has been shown that he left none of his epics in writing. As for the origins of native languages, I shall treat them in greater detail later on.

[24] Finally, the foreground is the brightest-lit plane of all, for it displays the symbols of the best-known human institutions, which the ingenious artist shows us with fanciful propriety: the Roman fasces, a sword and a purse supported by the fasces, a balance, and Mercury's caduceus, or herald's staff.

[25] The first of these symbols is the fasces because the first civil
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Empires grew from the union of the fathers' paternal powers. Among the pagans, these fathers were wise men versed in the science of the auspices; priests who made sacrifices to procure or interpret them properly; and kings, or at least monarchs, who commanded what they believed was the gods' will revealed in the auspices, and were thus subject only to God. Hence, the fasces consist of a bundle of liti or divining wands, which prove to be the first sceptres in the world.

In the agrarian unrest described above, these fathers resisted the bands of their rebellious servants. So they were naturally led to unite, forming the closed orders of the first ruling senates, meaning senates of household kings. The leaders of these senates were the heads of the various orders, who proved to be the first kings of what we call heroic cities. And ancient history tells us, but very obscurely, that in the earliest world of peoples kings were created 'by nature', in a manner which my Science seeks to study and discover. The reigning senates now sought to placate the bands of rebellious servants and reduce them to obedience, and therefore granted them an agrarian law, which proves to be the first civil law in the world. The servants, subdued by this law, naturally became the first urban plebeians. Under this law, the nobles granted the plebeians the natural ownership of the fields, but retained the civil ownership for themselves as the sole citizens of the heroic cities. From this, there later developed the eminent ownership, or eminent domain, of the heroic orders, which were the first civil or sovereign powers of the peoples. All three kinds of ownership were formed and distinguished from each other at the birth of these commonwealths. Among all nations, we find that these commonwealths, by a single idea expressed in various languages, were called Herculean commonwealths, or commonwealths of Curiates, meaning public assemblies of armed men. This sheds light on the origins of the famous ius Quintium, the right of citizens, which the interpreters of Roman law considered peculiar to the citizens of Rome, because it was so in later times. But we find that in the earliest age of Rome this right was the natural law of all the heroic tribes and nations.

From this natural law sprang the origins of many institutions, as many rivers flow from one great source:

1. The origin of cities, which developed from extended families which included both children and servants. We find that cities were naturally founded on two communities, the nobles who commanded and the plebeians who obeyed: for these two parts make up the entire policy or law of civil governments. I shall show that the first cities could not have arisen at all merely on the basis of simple nuclear families.

2. The origins of public authorities, which were born of the union of the private authorities, or paternal sovereignties, which existed in the family state.

3. The origins of war and peace, by which all commonwealths were born by force of arms and later ordered by laws. From their original nature, these two human institutions preserve the eternal property that wars are waged so that peoples may live secure in peace.

4. The origins of fiefs, which were of two kinds. Under the first kind, the rural fiefs, the plebeians subjected themselves to the nobles. Under the second, the noble or military fiefs, the nobles subjected themselves to the greater sovereignty of the heroic classes, while retaining sovereignty over their families. We shall see that the kingdoms of barbarous times have always arisen from such fiefs. This sheds light on the history of the modern kingdoms of Europe, which arose in the latest era of barbarism, a period even more obscure than the earliest barbarism described by Varro. Now, when the nobles gave fields to the plebeians, they exacted a tax which the Greeks called the 'tithe of Hercules', and which the Romans called both the tribute and the census, which was established by Servius Tullius. In time of war, this tribute also obliged the plebeians to provide military service at their own expense to the patricians, as ancient Roman history makes clear.

5. This reveals the origin of the census, which later became the basis of popular commonwealths, or democracies. Of all my researches into Roman institutions, the most arduous was to discover the manner in which the popular census replaced the census of Servius Tullius, which proves to have been an essential element in ancient aristocracies. Confusion about the census has misled all previous scholars into mistakenly asserting that Servius Tullius instituted the census as the basis of popular liberty.

26. There also sprang from the same source:

6. The origin of commerce. Commercial transactions began in the
manner I have described, with the real estate exchanged when cities were founded. Commerce took its name from the world’s first pay, merces, which consisted of the fields given by the heroes to their servants under the legal obligation of service, as described above.

(7) The origin of public treasuries. Crude precedents existed from the birth of commonwealths. But what are properly called public treasuries — aedaria from Latin aes, aedis, bronze, meaning money — were organized later, when it proved necessary to supply public funds to the plebeians in time of war.

(8) The origins of colonies. We find that these were bands of people, first peasants who served the heroes in order to sustain themselves, and later vassals who worked the fields for themselves under the real and personal obligations described above. I shall call these ‘heroic inland colonies’ to distinguish them from the heroic overseas colonies described above.

(9) Lastly, the origins of commonwealths. These arose in a severely aristocratic form, in which the plebeians were denied any share in civil rights. Accordingly, we find that the Roman commonwealth was originally an aristocratic kingdom. It fell during the tyrannical reign of Tarquinius Superbus, who governed the patricians so badly that he destroyed nearly all of the senate. So, when Lucretia was raped, Junius Brutus seized the occasion to incite the plebeians against the Tarquins. Having liberated Rome from their tyranny, he re-established the senate and reorganized the state according to its original principles. Yet by replacing a lifelong king with two consuls elected annually, Brutus did not introduce popular liberty, but in fact re-established aristocratic liberty. This type of liberty proves to have flourished until the Pubillian Law framed by Publius Philo, who was called ‘the people’s dictator’ because he declared the Roman republic popular in constitution. And it finally expired when the Poetelian Law effectively liberated the plebeians from the rural feudal right of patricians to imprison them for debt.

Now, although these two laws, the Pubillian and the Poetelian, constitute two milestones in Roman history, no political thinkers, jurists, or scholars of Roman law have bothered to study them. For they believed the myth that the Law of the Twelve Tables came from the free city of Athens to establish popular liberty at Rome. (I exposed this myth in my Principles of Universal Law, published many years ago.) But these two laws clearly prove that popular liberty was established internally by the Romans’ own natural customs. These principles of the Roman state accordingly establish new principles for Roman jurisprudence: for the laws of a commonwealth must be interpreted in accordance with its constitution.

[27] The sword rests on the fasces because heroic law, while a law of force, was tempered by religion. For only religion can hold force and arms in check when judiciary laws do not yet exist, or when those existing are no longer observed. This heroic law is precisely that of the hero Achilles, whom Homer sang to the peoples of Greece as a paragon of heroic virtue, and who determined every question of right by armed combat. In this, we discover the origin of duels. For just as duels were clearly prevalent during the medieval return of barbarism, so we find them practised in the barbarous age of antiquity, when powerful men had not yet learned to use judiciary laws to avenge each other’s offences and wrongs. Duels were fought with appeals to the certainty of divine judgments: the duelling parties called on God as their witness, and turned to him as judge of the offence. No matter what the outcome of the combat, they accepted its decision with such great reverence that even the wronged party, if defeated, was deemed guilty. This was a profound counsel of divine providence: for in a fierce and barbarous age, it led men who were ignorant of law to gauge it by God’s favour or disfavour, thus preventing their private feuds from sowing the seeds of wars that could eventually destroy the human race. This natural sense in the barbarian mind could spring only from the innate concept which people have of divine providence, to which they must submit when they see the good oppressed and the wicked prospering. For all these reasons, duels were considered a sort of divine purification. And just as duels are prohibited by today’s civilization, in which law regulates criminal and civil judgments, they were deemed necessary in that age

* Here and elsewhere, Vico simply writes ‘the return of barbarism’ in accordance with his cyclical notion of history. For the sake of clarity, I have consistently added the adjective ‘medieval’ to such expressions, even though he never refers to the Middle Ages.
of barbarism. In this manner, duels or private wars reveal the origins of 
our public wars, which are waged by civil authorities who are subject 
to God alone, so that God may settle them by granting victory, and 
the human race may repose in the certainty of their civil states. This is 
the so-called principle of the 'external justice' of wars.

[28] Also resting on top of the faces is a purse, which signifies that 
commerce using money began late, only after civil powers had been 
constituted. This is why coined money is not mentioned in either of 
Homer's epics. The symbol of the purse also represents the origin of 
coined money, which ultimately derived from family coats-of-arms. 
Now, like the first fields-of-arms, the first coats-of-arms represented 
rights and privileges of nobility which pertained to one particular family, 
rather than another. Later, they gave rise to public emblems, or ensigns 
of the people; then they were raised as military ensigns, which are still 
employed as wordless signals in military discipline; and eventually they 
were used by all peoples as designs for striking coins. From this we 
derive new principles for the science of medallions, or numismatics, as 
well as new principles for the science of what is called blazonry, or 
heraldry. (The first edition of my New Science contains three sections 
which I still find satisfactory; this is one of them.)

[29] After the purse, we see a balance, which indicates that after the 
heroic governments, which were aristocratic, came what I call human 
governments, which were initially democratic. These arose when 
peoples finally understood that our rational nature, which is our true 
human nature, is equal in all. Then, on the basis of this natural equality, 
these peoples gradually drew the heroes into the civil equality of 
democracies. (The events which occasioned these changes are studied 
my ideal eternal history, and are found to correspond precisely to 
moments in Roman history.) Now, civil equality is represented by the 
balance, because the Greeks used to say that in a democracy everything 
is settled by lot or by the balance. But eventually the factions of the 
powerful made it impossible for free peoples to retain their civil equality 
by means of laws, and they began to destroy each other in civil wars. 
As they struggled to survive, it naturally happened that they obeyed a 
'natural royal law', or rather a custom natural to human nations, and 
sought the protection of a monarchy, which is the second human form 
of government. (This natural royal law is common to all peoples in all 
ages, when their democracies become corrupt. By contrast, the 'civil 
royal law', which the Roman people supposedly enacted to legitimize 
the Roman monarchy in Augustus' person, is exposed as a myth in my 
Principles of Universal Law — as is the myth that the Law of the Twelve 
Tables came from Athens. If my treatise has any merit, it lies in exposing 
these two myths.)

In the present civilized age, these two forms of human government, 
democracy and monarchy, alternate one with the other; but neither of 
them naturally passes into an aristocracy, in which the nobility alone 
commands and all others obey. Indeed, there are today only a handful 
of aristocracies governed by nobles: Nuremberg in Germany; Dubrovnik 
in Dalmatia; and Venice, Genoa, and Lucca in Italy. Divine providence 
created these three types of states, which succeed each other in 
this natural order, together with the natural customs of such nations. 
But the nature of nations does not tolerate mixed constitutions devised 
by human minds. Even though he only noted the outward effects of 
the political causes analysed in my Science, Tacitus characterized such 
mixed states as 'more laudable than feasible, and shotirded when they 
happen to arise'. This discovery gives us new principles for political 
science, which not only differ from, but even contradict, our previous 
conceptions.

[30] The last of the symbols is the caduceus, or herald's staff. It 
reminds us that, as long as the heroic age was ruled by the natural right 
of force, the earliest peoples regarded each other as perpetual enemies. 
Indeed, they continually practised brigandage and piracy: for since their 
war never ceased, they saw no need to declare them. (In the barbarous 
age of antiquity, heroes considered the title of thief a badge of honour, 
just as in the medieval return of barbarism, powerful men vaunted the 
title of corsair.) But with the rise of human governments — whether 
democracies or monarchies — the law of the civilized nations introduced 
heralds to declare war, and hostilities began to be concluded by peace 
treaties. Here too we perceive the lofty counsel of divine providence 
in the age of barbarism. For when they were new and had to grow, 
the nations remained within their own borders; and despite their fierce 
and untamed natures, they did not march forth and destroy each other
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in foreign wars. Then, as time passed, these nations matured, growing at once more civilized and more tolerant of each other's customs. As a result, victorious nations found it easy to spare the lives of the vanquished under the just laws of victory.

[31] Thus, by studying the common nature of nations in the light of divine providence, my New Science, or new metaphysics, discovers the origins of divine and human institutions in the pagan nations. And on the basis of these origins, my Science establishes a system of the natural law of the nations, which progresses with great regularity and consistency in all three ages through which the Egyptians said they had passed in the entire course of world history. These three ages are the following:

1. The age of the gods, when the pagan peoples believed that they were living under divine government, and that all their actions were commanded by auspices and oracles, which are the most ancient institutions in secular history.

2. The age of the heroes, when heroes ruled everywhere in aristocratic states by virtue of their presumed natural superiority to the plebeians.

3. And finally, the age of men, when all recognized their equality in human nature, so that they first established democracies and later monarchies, which are the two forms of human government.

[32] Corresponding to these three types of nature and government, three kinds of language were spoken, which constitute the lexicon of my New Science:

1. The first dates from the age of families when pagan peoples had just embraced civilization. We find that it was a mute or wordless language which used gestures or physical objects bearing a natural relationship to the ideas they wanted to signify.

2. The second language used heroic emblems — such as similes, comparisons, images, metaphors, and descriptions of nature — as the principal lexicon of its heroic language, which was spoken in the age when heroes ruled.

3. The third language was the human or civilized language which used vocabulary agreed on by popular convention, and of which the people are the absolute lords. This language is proper to democracies and monarchies, for in those states it is the people who determine the meaning of the laws, which are binding for nobles and plebeians alike. Hence, once the laws of any nation are written in the common speech, knowledge of them is no longer in the hands of the nobility. Previously, the nobles of every nation, who were also priests, kept their laws in a secret language like a sacred object. This is the natural reason for the secrecy in which the Roman patricians kept their laws before popular liberty was established.

These are precisely the three languages which the Egyptians said had been spoken earlier in their world, corresponding exactly in both number and order to the three ages through which their world had passed:

1. The first was the hieroglyphic language, a sacred and secret language using mute gestures, as befits religions, in which observance is more important than speech.

2. The second was the symbolic language using resemblances, like the heroic language I have just described.

3. Finally, the third was the epistolary or vernacular language, which was used for the common business of everyday life. These three kinds of language were found among the Chaldaeans, Scythians, Egyptians, Germanic peoples, and all the other nations of pagan antiquity. (Hieroglyphic writing persisted later among the Egyptians simply because they were closed to foreign nations longer, which also explains why the Chinese still use ideograms. But the use of hieroglyphics by other nations proves that the Egyptians' presumption of their own remote antiquity is groundless.)

[33] My Science sheds light on the origins of both languages and letters, which were previously the despair of historians and philologists, whose bizarre and grotesque opinions I shall review. The unfortunate reason for their error is obvious: they simply assumed that nations developed languages first, and then letters. Yet languages and letters were born as twins and developed at the same pace through all three kinds. We find precise evidence for such origins in the stages of the Latin language which I discovered in the first edition of my New Science. (Earlier, I remarked that this work contains three sections which I do not regret writing; this is the second of them.) This evidence has offered me many discoveries about the history, government, and law of the
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ancient Romans, as the reader will find in countless passages of the present work. Following my example, scholars of Oriental languages, of Greek, and especially of German among the modern languages, which is a mother tongue, will be able to make discoveries about antiquities that surpass their expectations and mine.

[14] In seeking the basic principle of the common origins of languages and letters, we find that the first peoples of pagan antiquity were, by a demonstrable necessity of their nature, poets who spoke by means of poetic symbols. This discovery provides the master key of my New Science, but making it has cost me nearly an entire scholarly career spent in tireless researches. For to our more civilized natures, the poetic nature of the first people is utterly impossible to imagine, and can be understood only with the greatest effort. Their symbols were certain imaginative general categories, or archetypes. These were largely images of animate beings, such as gods and heroes, which they formed in their imagination, and to which they assigned all the specifics and particulars comprised by each generic category. (In precisely this way, the myths of civilized ages, such as the plots of the New Comedy, are rational archetypes derived from moral philosophy; and from these myths, our comic poets create in their characters these imaginative archetypes, which are simply the most complete ideas of human types in each genre.) We find, then, that the divine and heroic symbols were true myths, or true mythical speech. And we discover that, in describing the early age of the Greek peoples, the meaning of their allegories is based on identity rather than analogy, and is thus historical rather than philosophical.

These archetypes—which is what myths are in essence—were created by people endowed with vigorous imaginations but feeble powers of reasoning. So they prove to be true poetic statements, which are feelings clothed in powerful passions, and thus filled with sublimity and arousing wonder. We further find that poetic expression springs from two sources: the poverty of language, and the need to explain and be understood. This engendered the vividness of heroic speech, which was the direct successor of the mute language of the divine age, which had conveyed ideas through gestures and objects naturally related to them. Eventually, following the inevitable natural course of human institutions, the Assyrians, Syrians, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans developed languages, which began with heroic verse, then passed to iambics, and finally ended in prose. This progression is confirmed by the history of ancient poetry. And it explains why we find so many natural versifiers are born in German-speaking lands, particularly in the peasant region of Silesia; and why the first authors in Spanish, French, and Italian wrote in verse.

[35] From these three languages, we may derive a conceptual dictionary, which properly defines words in all the different articulate languages. In this work, I shall refer, when necessary, to this dictionary, of which the reader will find a detailed sample in the first edition of my Science. In that passage, I studied the timeless attributes of the fathers who lived in the age when languages were formed, both in the state of families and in the first heroic cities. Then, in fifteen different languages, both living and dead, I derived proper definitions of the words for father, which varied according to their different attributes. (Of the three sections in that edition which satisfy me, this is the third.) This lexicon proves necessary if we are to learn the language of the ideal eternal history through which the histories of all nations in time pass. And it is necessary if we are to be scientific in citing authorities that confirm our observations about the natural law of nations, and about particular kinds of jurisprudence.

[36] There were, then, three languages, proper to three ages in which three kinds of government ruled, conforming to three kinds of civil natures, which change as nations follow their course. And we find that these languages were accompanied by an appropriate kind of jurisprudence, which in each age followed the same order.

[37] (1) The first kind of jurisprudence was a mystical theology, which was practised in the age when the pagan peoples were commanded by gods. Its wise men were the theological poets, commonly called the founders of pagan civilization, who interpreted the mysteries of oracles, which in all nations gave their responses in verse. Hence, we find that ancient myths contain the hidden mysteries of their vernacular wisdom. This leads us to ponder the following questions. Why were later philosophers so eager to attain the wisdom of the ancients? What causes moved these philosophers to aspire to lofty philosophical speculations?
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And what encouraged them to impose their own esoteric wisdom on the ancient myths?

[38] (2) The second kind was heroic jurisprudence, which was exclusively concerned with scrupulous attention to words—the sort of prudence Ulysses reveals. This kind of jurisprudence was directed towards what Roman jurists called civil equity, and what we call 'reason of state'. With their limited ideas, the heroes deemed that they naturally had a right to precisely what, how much, and what sort had been defined in words. Even today, we can observe this in peasants and other uncouth folk: for in their contentious involving words and sense, they obstinately insist that their right lies in the words. Here too we see the counsel of divine providence. For while the pagan peoples were still incapable of grasping universal concepts, which good laws must contain, their particular care for the words moved them to a universal observance of the laws. And if in some cases this equity made their laws harsh and even cruel, they naturally tolerated it because they deemed this to be the nature of their justice. The heroes were also encouraged to observe the laws by that supreme private interest which, as the only citizens, they identified with that of their homelands. Hence, to protect the safety of their homelands, they did not hesitate to sacrifice themselves and their families to the will of the laws. The laws in turn, by protecting the common safety of their homelands, protected their private monarchical reigns over their families. This powerful private interest, moreover, joined to the supreme arrogance of a barbarous age, shaped their heroic nature, which inspired so many heroic deeds to protect their homelands.

Yet next to these heroic deeds, we must place the intolerable pride, the invariable greed, and the merciless cruelty with which ancient Roman patricians treated the unfortunate plebeians. Roman history explicitly records such events during the period which Livy himself calls the age of Roman virtue, and the greatest flowering of popular liberty ever dreamed of in Rome. We find that such public virtue was merely the good use to which providence turned grievous, filthy, and savage private vices. For it preserved cities during an age when the minds of men, being concerned with particulars, were naturally incapable of grasping the notion of a common good. From this, we derive new principles to prove the point which St Augustine makes in his chapter on the virtue of the Romans. And we shall dispel the opinion which scholars previously held concerning the heroism of the earliest peoples. We find that this sort of civil equity was observed naturally by heroic nations in both war and peace, and I shall adduce striking examples of it from both the ancient and medieval periods of barbarism. And we find that the Romans practised this civil equity in their private affairs as long as their republic remained aristocratic, that is, until the age of the Publilian and Poetician Laws, before which civil equity was entirely based on the Law of the Twelve Tables.

[39] (3) The third and last form of jurisprudence was natural equity, which rules naturally in free commonwealths. In these, each person seeks his own particular good, which is in fact the same for all, so that the people are inadvertently led to enact universal laws. Hence, they naturally desire laws which are generously flexible when applied to specific circumstances that call for the distribution of equal benefits. This good was called sequum bonum in Latin, and was the subject of later Roman jurisprudence, which by Cicero's day was beginning to be recast by the edicts of the Roman praetors. This jurisprudence is still compatible with the nature of monarchies, perhaps even more than with democracies. For in these, monarchs have accustomed their subjects to attend to their own private interests, while they themselves have taken charge of all public affairs. And monarchs want all their subject nations made equal by laws, so that they will all take an equal interest in the state. This is why the emperor Hadrian reformed all of Rome's natural heroic law according to the natural human law of the provinces. And he decreed that jurisprudence be based on the Perpetual Edict, which Salvius Julianus compiled almost exclusively from provincial edicts.

[40] We may now review all the basic elements of our world of nations, using the symbols that represent them. The litus or dividing wand represents divination; the water and fire on the altar represent sacrifices and the first nuclear families. The funerary urn in the forest represents burial rites. The plough supported by the altar represents the cultivation and division of the fields, the refuges, the later extended families including servants, and the first agrarian disputes. The rudder at the foot of the altar represents the earliest heroic colonies—first the
inland colonies, then, as these waned, the overseas colonies— and with them, the earliest migrations of peoples. All these institutions arose in the age of the Egyptian gods, which through ignorance or oversight Varro called the dark age.

The fasces represent the first heroic commonwealth; the distinction of three kinds of ownership: natural, civil, and eminent domain; the first civil powers; and the first unequal alliances formed by the first agrarian law. (By this law, cities were established on the rural fields of the plebeians, who became feudal subjects of the noble fields of the heroes. And the sovereign heroes in turn became subjects of the greater sovereignty of the heroic ruling orders.) The sword supported by the fasces represents the public wars waged by the cities, which originated in brigandage and piracy. (Duels, or private wars, must have arisen much earlier within the state of families.) The purse represents the emblems of nobility, or family coats-of-arms, which were later transferred to medals. These first ensigns of the people later became military ensigns, and finally were used on coins, which imply trade in movable goods using money. (Trade in real estate, using natural payments in produce and labour, had begun earlier during the divine age, as a result of the first agrarian law, from which commonwealths were born.) The balance represents the laws of equality, which are properly speaking the only laws. And finally, the caduceus, or herald’s staff, represents the formal declaration of war, and their conclusion by peace treaties.

All these symbols are distant from the altar, because they represent the civil institutions established in the period when false religions were gradually disappearing. This period began with the heroic agrarian disputes, which gave their name to the Egyptian age of heroes, which Varro calls the mythical age. The tablet with the alphabets is placed between the divine and human symbols because false religions began to vanish as letters were introduced and gave rise to philosophies. By contrast, the true religion, which is our Christian religion, is confirmed in human terms by the sublimest philosophies: by Plato, and by Aristotle, insofar as he agrees with Plato.

The entire idea of this work may be summarized as follows. The darkness in the background of the picture represents the uncertain, formless, and obscure material of this Science, which is outlined in my...
### Chronological Table* Based on the Egyptians’ Three Epochs of World History: The Ages of Gods, Heroes, and Men (1)

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<td><strong>Triumvirates</strong></td>
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<th>Romans</th>
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* According to tradition, the creation took place in 4004 B.C., and Rome was founded in 553 B.C. In my translation, I have often added equivalent dates in parentheses.
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<tr>
<th>Era</th>
<th>Phoenicians (1)</th>
<th>Egyptians (8)</th>
<th>Greeks</th>
<th>Romans</th>
<th>Year of the World</th>
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<td>Lycogas gives laws to the Spartans</td>
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<td>The Olympic games, first established by Hercules and later suspended, are reinstated by Iphitus (28)</td>
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<td>1020</td>
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<td>Homer, who lived before vernacular letters were invented and who never saw Egypt (39)</td>
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<td>1010</td>
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<td>Numa Pompilius king</td>
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Idamthymnus king of Scythia (38)

Seven Sages of Greece: Solon establishes popular freedom in Athens, and Thales of Miletus introduces philosophy by his study of natural science (33)
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SECTION I
NOTES ON THE CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE IN WHICH THE HISTORICAL MATERIALS ARE ORGANIZED

1 Chronological Table Based on the Egyptians' Three Epochs of World History: The Ages of Gods, Heroes, and Men

[43] My Chronological Table gives an overview of the nations of the ancient world from the universal flood through the Second Punic War, passing from the Jews to the Chaldaeans, Scythians, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. On it, there appear the most renowned people and events, as they are commonly assigned by scholars to specific times and places. But in fact these people and events did not exist at the times and places commonly assigned to them, or never existed at all. By contrast, from the deep and impenetrable darkness in which they lay buried, there emerge other notable people and consequential events that produced or witnessed decisive moments in human history. My Notes will show this, and will thus make clear how the civilization of the nations arose from uncertain, unseemly, imperfect, and insubstantial beginnings.

[44] In addition, the reader will find my Table quite at odds with John Marsham's Canon of Egyptian, Jewish, and Greek Chronology. Marsham tried to show that the government and religion of the Egyptians antedate those of all the other nations of the world; and that their sacred rites and civil statutes passed to other peoples, and were eventually adopted with some modifications by the Jews. Marsham's opinions were soon embraced by John Spencer, who in his treatise On Urin and Tummin asserts that, through the sacred Cabala, the Israelites borrowed all their theology from the Egyptians. At length, Marsham's work was
applauded in the *Pagan Philosophies of Antiquity* of Otto Van Heurn, who writes in his discussion of the Chaldeans that the Egyptians instructed Moses about divine rites before he introduced them to the Jews in his laws.* Against these positions, Herman Wits mounted a counter-attack in his *Comparison of Egyptian and Jewish Rites*. He asserts that the first pagan author to give us accurate information about the Egyptians is Dio Cassius, who flourished under the philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius. In fact, this view is refuted by a passage in Tacitus' *Annals*, describing Germanicus' journey in the Near East. When he travelled to Egypt to see the famous antiques of Thebes, Germanicus asked a priest to explain the hieroglyphics on some obelisks. Talking nonsense, the priest explained that they commemorated the boundless might of king Ramses, which once extended to Africa, the Near East, and even Asia Minor – an area nearly equal to the vast Roman empire of the time! But perhaps Wits omitted to mention this passage because it contradicted his thesis.

[45] Egypt’s boundless antiquity yielded little esoteric wisdom to the Egyptians who lived inland from Alexandria. In his *Miscellanies*, Clement of Alexandria tells us that in his day about forty-two of the Egyptians’ ‘priestly’ books were in circulation. But they contained gross errors in philosophy and astronomy. Strabo often ridicules Chaeremon, the teacher of Dionysius the Areopagite (Dionysius Glaucis), for repeating them.† In turn, the Egyptians’ medical notions are impugned in Galen’s treatise *On Hæmetic Medicine* as rank nonsense and mere quackery. The Egyptians’ morals were dissolute: for they not only tolerated and permitted prostitutes, but also made them respectable. Their theology was full of superstitions, illusions, and witchcraft. And the magnificence of their obelisks and pyramids is the product of barbarism, which has an affinity for the colossal. Even today we criticize Egyptian sculpture and casting as hopelessly crude. By contrast, sublety is the fruit of philosophy. This is why Greece, the nation of philosophers, was alone resplendent with all the fine arts devised by human genius: painting,

*sculpture, casting, and carving in relief. These are the subtlest arts, because they must conceive abstractly the surface contours of the objects they depict.*

[46] By contrast, in Alexandria, the city which Alexander the Great founded on the sea, the ancient wisdom of the Egyptians was praised to the heavens. By uniting African acumen with Greek subtlety, Alexandria produced illustrious philosophers of divinity, and gained great renown as a seat of divine learning. Indeed, the Museum at Alexandria became as celebrated as all the schools of Athens put together: the Academy, the Lyceum, the Stoic, and the Cynics. Alexandria was called the ‘Mother of the Sciences’. And for its excellence, the Greeks simply called it *Pólis*, the city, just as Athens was called *Astu* and Rome *Urb*. Alexandria was the birthplace of Manetho, the Egyptian high priest who transformed all of Egyptian history into an exalted theology of nature. (Earlier, Greek philosophers had treated their own myths in precisely the same way. Yet these myths were their most ancient histories, which shows us that Greek myths and Egyptian hieroglyphics underwent the same process.)

[47] Such great vanity for profound wisdom suited the Alexandrians, whose conceited nature caused them to be mocked as ‘glory-hungry beasts’. Alexandria was an important trade centre both for the Mediterranean and, through the Red Sea, for the Indian Ocean and the East Indies. So when the Alexandrians heard merchants of various nations describe false deities scattered throughout the world, they believed that all of them had originated in Egypt. (In a golden passage listing the city’s reprehensible customs, Tacitus calls it ‘eager for strange religions’.) Since every pagan nation had a Jupiter, they presumed that their Jupiter Ammon was the most ancient of all. And they likewise presumed that the Herculean heroes in other nations, of which Varro counted forty, all derived their name from the Egyptian Hercules. Both of these claims, which are reported by Tacitus, derive from two sources. First, the Egyptians were blindly persuaded of their own immeasurable antiquity, and therefore vaunted their superiority over all the other nations, even claiming that they had formerly ruled a great part of the ancient world. Second, they were unaware that pagan peoples had separately developed uniform ideas about gods and heroes, even though...
they had no contact with each other, as my New Science will clearly show.

Even the Augustan historian Diodorus Siculus, who lavishes overly flattering judgments on the Egyptians, does not credit them with more than 2,000 years of ancient history. And Diodorus’ conclusions are discredited by Jacques Cappel, who in his Sacred History of Egypt puts them on a level with those which Xenophon bestowed on Cyrus the Great and with those, I might add, which Plato often invented about the Persians. In sum, all these observations about the vanity of the ancient Egyptians’ profound wisdom are confirmed by the case of the forgery Pimander, which was long passed off as Hermetic doctrine. For Isaac Casaubon exposed the work as containing no doctrine older than the Platonists, whose language it borrows. And Claude Saumaise dismissed the entire work as a jumbled and disjointed compilation.

[48] The Egyptians’ mistaken belief in their own great antiquity sprang from the indeterminacy of the human mind, a property which often causes people to exaggerate immeasurably the magnitude of the unknown. In this, the Egyptians resembled the Chinese, who developed into a great nation isolated from all others, like the Egyptians until the reign of Psammetichus. The same isolation affected the Scythians up to the reign of Idanthyrsus. Indeed, one popular tradition made the Scythians surpass even the Egyptians in antiquity. This tradition must perforce date from the starting-point of secular universal history, which in Justin’s account began with two mighty kings who antedate even the Assyrian monarchy. These were Tanaus the Scythian and Sesotris the Egyptian, whose supposed existence previously made the world seem much older than it really is. It is said that Tanaus first led a vast army through the Near East to conquer Egypt, even though its terrain makes it naturally resistant to invasion, and that Sesotris then led equal forces to conquer Scythia. (In fact, Scythia was unknown to the Persians even after they conquered the neighbouring Medes, and remained so until the age of Darius the Great, who declared war on the Scythian king Idanthyrsus. And in an age when Persia was quite civilized, Idanthyrsus was so barbarous that in his reply to Darius he used five physical objects instead of words, because he could not even write in symbols!) Yet we are to suppose that these two mighty kings crossed Asia with their vast armies...

but failed to conquer a single province for either Scythia or Egypt. Indeed, they left the region in such freedom that it later gave birth to the first of the four most famous monarchies in the world—Assyria!

[49] For similar reasons, perhaps, the Chaldaeans did not fail to enter the contest for greatest antiquity. They too were an inland nation and in fact older than the other two. The Chaldaeans vainly boasted that they had preserved astronomical records dating back some 28,000 years. This may explain why the Jewish historian Flavious Josephus mistakenly believed that such records actually survived from before the flood. He writes that these were inscribed on two columns erected before the two floods: one of brass, and another of marble, which he claims to have seen in Syria. Such great importance did the ancient nations attribute to preserving their astronomical records—a sense which evidently died out in later nations! We must assign Josephus’ column a place in the Museum of Credulity.

[50] We find that the Chinese also write using hieroglyphics, as did the ancient Egyptians, to say nothing of the Scythians, who in fact were ignorant of writing! For many thousands of years, these three peoples had no contact with any other nations that could have taught them the true antiquity of the world. Now, imagine someone sleeping who awakes to find himself locked in a tiny dark chamber. Terrified by the darkness, he will believe that the room is much larger than what he can touch with his hands. In the obscurity of their chronology, this is just what has happened to the Chinese, the Egyptians, and the Chaldaeans as well. To be sure, the Jesuit father Michele Ruggieri asserts that he has seen Chinese books that were printed before the coming of Jesus Christ. And the History of China, by Father Martini, another Jesuit, places Confucius in remotest antiquity. (According to Martin Schoock, this view has converted many to atheism. In his book Noah’s Universal Flood, he notes that it may even have moved Isaac de la Peyrière, author of Adam’s Predecessors, to renounce the Catholic faith and to write that the flood was limited to the lands of the Jews alone.) But Nicolas Trigault is better informed than either Ruggieri or Martini. In his Christian Mission to China, he writes that the Chinese invented printing not more than two centuries before the Europeans, and that Confucius lived not more than 500 years before Christ. Indeed, like the Egyptians’ priestly
books, the philosophy of Confucius is crude and inept, and almost entirely concerned with popular morality, meaning the morality imposed on the people by their laws.

[51] We have reviewed the vain opinions held by the pagan nations, and especially the Egyptians, concerning their own antiquity as a necessary preamble to all our knowledge of the pagan world. We proceed in two ways: (1) by seeking to determine methodically this important starting-point, the precise time and place in which pagan civilization began in the world; and (2) by seeking to offer human reasons to support our Christian faith. (This faith begins from the truth that the first people in the world were the Jews, descended from Adam, who was created by the true God at the world’s creation.) Accordingly, the first science we must study is mythology, meaning the interpretation of myths: for all pagan histories have mythical origins, and the myths of the pagan nations were their first histories. By applying this method, we shall discover the beginnings of the sciences as well as of the nations: for the sciences could only arise within nations that were already formed.

Throughout my New Science, I show that the sciences sprang from institutions necessary or useful to mankind, which were later perfected as ingenious individuals refined them. This must be the starting-point of universal history, whose origins and principles were previously lacking, as all scholars agree.

[52] In this study, we shall greatly profit from the antiquity of the Egyptians. For they have preserved two fragments of their history which are no less amazing than the pyramids and which contain two great historical truths. The first is recorded by Herodotus, who says that the Egyptians divided all of the world’s history into three ages: (1) the age of the gods, (2) the age of heroes, and (3) the age of men. The second fragment is reported by Johannes Scheffer in his Pythagorean Philosophy. He says that in these three ages the Egyptians spoke three languages, corresponding to them in number and order: (1) a hieroglyphic language, using sacred characters; (2) a symbolic language, using heroic characters; and (3) an epistolary language, using characters agreed on by the people.

Now, when Varro did not follow this historical division, he must have acted by choice, rather than from ignorance. For by virtue of his boundless erudition, Varro was deservedly eulogized as ‘the most learned

of the Romans’, and this was in the age of Cicero, when the Romans were most enlightened. It may be that Varro perceived in the Roman people, as my principles will show true in all nations, that all their divine and human institutions had an indigenous origin, within Latium. Hence, in his masterpiece Divine and Human Institutions, of which the injustice of time has deprived us, Varro was at pains to assign Latin origins to Roman institutions. (This shows how much he believed in the myth that the Law of the Twelve Tables came to Rome from Athens!) At any rate, Varro divides all the ages of the world into three ages: (1) the dark age, or age of the gods; (2) the mythical age, or age of heroes; and (3) the historical age, which the Egyptians called the age of men.

[53] We may further profit from the antiquity of the Egyptians by reflecting on two of their conceited traditions. These exemplify what is called the concept of nations by Diodorus Siculus, who observes that every nation, barbarous or civilized, regards itself as the most ancient, and believes that it preserves traditions dating from the beginning of the world. (We shall see that this was the privilege of the Jews alone.) I mentioned earlier two of the Egyptians’ conceited traditions: first, that their Jupiter Ammon was more ancient than the others, and second, that all the Herculean heroes of other nations took their name from the Egyptian Hercules. In other words, all nations passed first through an age of the gods, whose king was everywhere believed to be Jupiter, and then through an age of heroes claiming to be sons of the gods, of whom Hercules was reputed the greatest.

2 The Jews

[54] The first column on my Table is dedicated to the Jews. We know by the solemn authority of Flavius Josephus and Lactantius Firmianus, whom I shall cite later, that the Jews lived unknown to all the pagan nations. Yet they had an accurate chronology of the world, which is today accepted as true by even the most rigorous critics, according to the estimate given by Philo the Jew. Indeed, if Philo differs from Eusebius, the discrepancy amounts to a mere 1,500 years, which is a minor amount, compared to the distortions made by the ancient
3 The Chaldaeans

[55] The second column represents the Chaldaeans. Geographically, the kingdom of Assyria was the farthest inland of the inhabited world; and my Science shows that the formation of inland nations preceded that of coastal nations. It is certain that the Chaldaeans were the first sages of pagan antiquity, and their Zoroaster is commonly regarded by historians as the first sage in history. There is no doubt that the starting-point of universal history is the monarchy of Assyria, which must originally have been formed of the Chaldaean people. As these grew to a great multitude, they must have developed into the nation of Assyrians ruled by Ninus, who founded his monarchy with native peoples rather than foreigners. Ninus abolished the name of the Chaldaeans and replaced it with that of the Assyrians, because the plebeians of that nation had supported his ascent to the throne. (My work shows that almost every nation underwent this political process, as the Romans clearly demonstrate.)

History further tells us that Zoroaster was killed by Ninus. In heroic language, this means that the Chaldaeans' aristocratic kingdom, symbolized by the heroic Zoroaster, was overthrown by the popular freedom of the native plebeians. For we shall see that in the heroic age the plebeians were a nation distinct from the nobility, and that Ninus set himself up as monarch with their support. If this were not the case, there would arise a sort of chronological monster in Assyrian history. For within the lifetime of one man, Zoroaster, Chaldaea would have grown from a region of lawless nomads to a dominion of such magnitude that Ninus easily transformed it into a great monarchy. Without my historical principles, the figure of Ninus at the starting-point of universal history previously made it appear that the Assyrian kingdom was born overnight, like frogs after a summer storm.

[56] The third column represents the Scythians, who surpassed the Egyptians in antiquity, according to the popular tradition I have just cited.

5 The Phoenicians

[57] The fourth column represents the Phoenicians, who antedate the Egyptians. Popular tradition says that the Phoenicians, who had learned from the Chaldaeans, taught the Egyptians how to use a quadrant to measure polar latitude. Later we shall show that they also brought vernacular letters to other nations.

6 The Egyptians

[58] For various reasons given above, the Egyptians merit the fifth place in my Table, even though in his Canon Marsham declares them the most ancient nation of all.

7 Zoroaster: Kingdom of the Chaldaeans
Year of the World 1756 (2249 BC)

[59] My Science will show that Zoroaster was the poetic archetype of the founders of peoples in the Near East. We find as many Zoroasters scattered throughout that vast part of the world as there are Herculean heroes in the opposite part to the West. As for the Herculean heroes with European traits whom Varro noted in Asia Minor, at Tyre and in Phoenicia, they were perhaps considered Zoroasters in the Near East. But through the conceit of scholars, who assert that they know is as ancient as the world, all these many founders were conflated into one man crammed with profound esoteric wisdom. And they thrust on this man the philosophical Oracles of Zoroaster, which palm off recent doctrines of Pythagoras and Plato as ancient ones. Not content with this, the conceit of scholars then puffed itself up even further by inventing a succession of national schools. Supposedly, Zoroaster taught
Berosus of Chaldaea; Berosus taught Hermes Trismegistus of Egypt; Hermes Trismegistus taught Atlas of Ethiopia; Atlas taught Orpheus of Thrace; and finally, Orpheus founded his school in Greece. Yet we shall soon see exactly how easy such long journeys were between the early nations. For since they had only recently emerged from savagery, they all lived in isolation, unknown even to their neighbours, and only came to know each other in the event of war or by reason of trade.

Confused by the various popular traditions they have themselves collected, historians do not know whether the Chaldaeans were individuals, families, or an entire people or nation. But we may resolve these ambiguities by the following principles. First there were individuals, then whole families, later an entire people, and finally a great nation, on which the Assyrian monarchy was founded. The first wisdom of the Chaldaeans lay in the vernacular science of divination, by which they divined the future from the nightly paths of falling stars. Later, it extended to judicial astrology, which is why in Roman law a judicial astrologer was called a Chaldaean.

8 Iapetus, ancestor of the Giants
Year of the World 1856 (2239 BC)

Giants naturally existed among all the earliest pagan nations. This is clear from the references to natural history found in Greek myths, as well as from physical and moral proofs we find in civil history.

9 Nimrod: The confusion of languages
Year of the World 1856 (2239 BC)

The confusion of languages happened miraculously, creating many different tongues all at once. According to the Church Fathers, this confusion of languages gradually destroyed the purity of the sacred language which was spoken before the flood. We must take this to mean the languages spoken by the Near Eastern peoples among whom Shem propagated the human race. By contrast, the nations in the rest of the world fared differently. The races descended from Ham and Japheth were destined to be scattered throughout the earth’s great forest, where they wandered like beasts for 200 years. Solitary and alone, they bore children whom they raised like beasts, lacking human speech and living in a brutish state. Precisely this much time had to elapse before the earth, drenched by the universal flood, could dry out. The earth then sent forth what Aristotle calls dry exhalations into the atmosphere, which generated lightning bolts that stunned and terrified humankind. In their fright, people abandoned themselves to false religions, worshipping various Jupiters. (These were so numerous that Varro counted as many as forty of them, among which the Egyptians claimed their Jupiter Ammon as the most ancient of all.) In these religions, they developed a sort of divination which divided the future from thunder and lightning, and from the flight of eagles, which they considered birds sacred to Jupiter. The Near Eastern peoples, by contrast, developed a simpler system of divination, which observed the motions of the planets and the aspects of the stars, as in the case of Zoroaster. The Near Eastern peoples gave rise to the first vernacular wisdom, which was astrology, and so the first monarchy arose among them, which was Assyria.

10 The giant Prometheus steals fire from the sun
Year of the World 1856 (2239 BC)

This myth implies that Heaven reigned on earth, in an age when Heaven was believed to be only as high as the mountain tops. Popular tradition also relates that Heaven conferred many great benefits on humankind.
NEW SCIENCE

11 Devotion

[65] In the same age, Themis, the goddess of divine justice, had a temple on Mt Parnassus, and judged men’s affairs on earth.

12 Hermes Trismegistus the elder: Egyptian age of the gods

[66] According to Cicero’s On the Nature of the Gods, this is the Hermes whom the Egyptians called ‘Thoth’ – from which the Greeks supposedly derived theos, god – and who gave the Egyptians their letters and laws. According to Marsham, the Egyptians then taught them to the other nations of the world. But in fact the Greeks wrote their laws not in hieroglyphics, but in vernacular letters. And it was previously thought that Cadmus introduced such letters into Greece from Phoenicia. But if that were the case, then the Greeks made no use of them for more than 700 years. Witness Homer, who lived during this period, but never used the word nomos, law, in either of his epics – a fact noted by Everard Feith in his Homeric Antiquities. Instead, Homer entrusted his epics to the memory of the rhapsodes, because in his day Greek vernacular letters had not yet been invented – as the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus stoutly maintains against the Greek grammarian Apsion. Besides, when Greek letters emerged after Homer, how different they were from their Phoenician models!

[67] Still, all these difficulties appear minor, when we ask the following questions. How could any nations be founded without any laws? How were dynasties founded within Egypt before the arrival of Hermes Trismegistus?

As if letters were essential to laws! As if Spartan laws weren’t legal, when a law of Lycurgus himself prohibited the knowledge of letters. As if our civil nature prevented laws from being framed and proclaimed orally! As if we did not in fact find in Homer two kinds of assembly, the boule or secret council, in which heroes deliberated orally about their laws, and the agora or public assembly, whose decisions were also proclaimed orally!

And, finally, as if divine providence had failed to provide for our human needs! For providence ensured that, even without letters, all barbarous nations were founded on the basis of their customs, and were governed by written laws only later when they had become civilized. During the medieval return of barbarism, the first laws of the new-born European nations sprang from their customs, and the most ancient of these were their feudal customs. (We shall return to this point later, when we show that fiefs were the first sources of all the laws that developed in nations both ancient and modern; and hence that the natural law of nations was established not by laws, but by civilized customs.)

[68] Let us now consider a critical issue in the history of Christianity, namely, the view that Moses was not indebted to the Egyptians for his sublime Jewish theology. At first glance, chronology would seem to pose a great obstacle, since it places Moses after Hermes Trismegistus. Yet this difficulty has been met by my earlier arguments, and it may be completely eliminated if we cite the principles implied by a truly golden passage in Iamblichus’ Mysteres of the Egyptians. For Iamblichus writes that the Egyptians attributed to Hermes Trismegistus every invention that proved necessary or beneficial to their civil life. Thus, Hermes could not have been an individual rich in esoteric wisdom who was later consecrated as a god. Instead, he must have been a poetic archetype of the earliest Egyptian sages who, being wise in vernacular wisdom, founded first the families and then the peoples who eventually made up that great nation. Furthermore, if we are to preserve the Egyptian division of history into the three ages of gods, heroes, and men, and if Hermes Trismegistus was their god, then it follows from this same passage in Iamblichus that the life of Hermes corresponds to the entire Egyptian age of the gods.

13 The Golden Age: Greek age of the gods

[69] As a particular aspect of the divine age, mythology relates that the gods mingled with men on earth. In order to insure the certainty of my principles of chronology, my New Science envisions a natural theology. This means a genealogy of the gods as it naturally formed in the imagination of the Greeks on certain occasions, when they perceived that institutions necessary or useful to humankind had relieved or assisted them in the early childhood of the world. (The world of these first people
was subject to fearful religions, for whatever they saw or imagined, and even did themselves, they regarded as something divine.) Since there were twelve famous gods of the so-called major tribes, meaning the gods that men consecrated during the age of families, we may accordingly divide this age into twelve shorter periods. Hence, a rational chronology of poetic history reckons the age of the gods as lasting 900 years. This gives us the beginnings of universal secular history.

14 Three dialects are spread through Greece by the three sons of Hellen, son of Deucalion, grandson of Prometheus, and great-grandson of Iapetus
Year of the World 2082 (1923 BC)

[70] Taking their name from Hellen, the native Greeks were called Hellenes. By contrast, the Greeks in Italy were called Grai, and their land Graikia, so that in Latin they were called Graeci. This shows how well the Greeks in Italy knew the name of their homeland across the sea, which they left to colonize it! Indeed, the name Graikia is found in no Greek author, as Jacques Le Paulmier observes in his Description of Ancient Greece.

15 Cecrops the Egyptian leads twelve colonies into Attica, which Theseus later unites to found Athens

[71] Strabo objects that the landscape of Attica was too harsh to encourage foreigners to settle there, for he wishes to prove that the Attic dialect is one of the earliest native dialects in Greece.

16 Cadmus the Phoenician founds Thebes in Boeotia, and introduces vernacular letters into Greece
Year of the World 2448 (1557 BC)

[72] If Cadmus had introduced the Phoenician alphabet there, Boeotia’s literary foundations would have made it the most ingenious region of Greece. But it produced men of such stupidity that the adjective Boeotian became proverbial for a dullard.

ESTABLISHING PRINCIPLES

17 Saturn: Latin age of the gods
Year of the World 2491 (1514 BC)

[73] This age of the gods marks the beginning of the nations of Latium, and its features correspond to those of the Greeks’ Golden Age. My study of myths reveals that the Greeks’ first gold was grain, which is why for many centuries the earliest nations reckoned their years by their harvests of grain. The Romans named Saturn after satus, sowing; and the Greeks called him Chronos, which means time, and is the root of the word chronology.

18 Hermes Trismegistus the younger: Egyptian age of heroes
Year of the World 2553 (1452 BC)

[74] Hermes the younger must be the poetic archetype of the Egyptian age of heroes. In Greece, this heroic age comes after an age of gods which lasted 900 years. But in Egypt the age of the gods corresponds to only three generations: a father, son, and grandson. We have noted a similar anachronism in Assyrian history, in the figure of Zoroaster.

19 Danaus the Egyptian expels the Inachids from Argos
Year of the World 2553 (1452 BC)

[75] These royal successions offer us important standards for chronology. For example, Danaus seizes the kingdom of Argos, which had previously been been ruled by nine kings of the house of Inachus. If we apply a chronological rule of thumb, this must have been a period of 300 years, just as the fourteen Latin kings of Alba ruled for nearly 500 years.

[76] But Thucydides says that in the heroic age kings dethroned each other almost daily. Thus, Amulius expels Numitor from the kingdom of Alba, but Romulus expels Amulius and reinstates Numitor. This happened because of the ferocity of the age, because heroic cities had

* I translate Vico’s amoni di chronologia by ‘standards of chronology’. In Greek, canon means both standard measure and chronological table.
no walls, and because the use of fortresses was still unknown. Later, we shall encounter similar conditions during the medieval return of barbarism.

20 Scattered throughout Greece, the Heracleids introduce the age of heroes. In Crete, Satania or Italy, and Asia, the Curetes introduce priestly kingdoms
Year of the World 2682 (1523 BC)

[77] Denis Petrus observes that these two great fragments of antiquity occur in Greek history before the Greeks' heroic age. In fact, the Heracleids, or sons of Hercules, were scattered throughout Greece more than a century before the appearance of their father Hercules, who would have had to be born many centuries earlier to beget so many descendants.

21 Dido leaves Tyre to found Carthage

[78] We place Dido at the end of the Phoenicians' heroic age. She must have been exiled from Tyre after losing a heroic contest; indeed, she admitted that her brother-in-law's beard had forced her to depart. In heroic language, the Tyrian masses were called a woman because they were made up of weak and defeated men.

22 Orpheus and the age of theological poets

[79] Orpheus, who supposedly reduces the wild beasts of Greece to human civilization, turns out to be the vast den of a thousand monsters. For he comes from Thrace, which was the homeland of fierce Mars-like warriors, rather than civilized philosophers. Indeed, the Thracians remained so barbarous even in later ages that the philosopher Androsthenes removed Orpheus from the number of sages solely because he had been born in Thrace. As that nation emerged, Orpheus supposedly grew so learned in Greek that in it he composed verses of wonderful poetry, which civilized the barbarians by appealing to their ears. Yet later, when they had already formed nations, these same Thracians were not restrained from destroying cities whose wonders appealed to the eyes. And Orpheus finds the Greeks still living like wild beasts, even though a thousand years earlier Deucalion had taught them piety by his reverence and fear of divine justice.

Now, a thousand years before Orpheus, Deucalion had built a temple to divine justice on Mt Parnassos, which later became the dwelling of Apollo and the Muses, who are the gods of civilization and its arts. With reverent fear, Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha stood before this temple with their heads veiled, as a sign of their modesty in copulating, which denotes marriage. They picked up the stones at their feet, which symbolized their previously brutish life. They changed the stones into people by casting these stones over their shoulders, that is, by means of household instruction within the family state.

Then, some 700 years before Orpheus, Hellen unified the Greeks with a single language, which spread throughout Greece as the three different dialects spoken by his sons. We have seen that 300 years earlier the house of Inachus had founded its kingdoms, which continued by royal successions throughout this period. At last, Orpheus arrived to teach human civilization to the Greeks. From the savage state in which he found it, he raised Greece to such splendour as a nation that he himself was Jason's shipmate in the quest for the Golden Fleece. But this allusion to a nautical expedition must remind us that navies and navigation are the last of a people's achievements. Also on board were Castor and Pollux, the brothers of Helen of Troy, who caused the celebrated Trojan War.

Thus, in the life of this one man, so many civil institutions were established for which a thousand years would hardly suffice. As a monument of Greek chronology, Orpheus resembles two others noted earlier: Zoroaster in Assyrian history, and Hermes Trismegistus (both the elder and the younger) in Egyptian history. This would explain why Cicero in his On the Nature of the Gods suspects that such a person as Orpheus never existed.

[80] These great difficulties of chronology are compounded by others, no less serious, of a moral and political nature. For Orpheus founds Greek civilization using the following mythical examples: Jupiter the adulterer, Juno the mortal enemy of Hercules' virtues, Diana the virgin
who seduces the sleeping Endymion, the Apollo who gives oracles but hunts the chaste maiden Daphne to her death, and Mars who commits adultery with Venus in the sea— as if the crime on land were not enough. Nor is the gods’ unbridled lust satisfied by illicit intercourse with women. Jupiter burns with perverted love for Ganymede. His lust does not stop here, but at last turns to bestiality, when Jupiter transforms himself into a swan and couples with Leda. Such lust practised on men and beasts was in absolute form the execrable abomination of the lawless world. By contrast, many of the Olympic gods and goddesses never marry; and the only marriage of Greek deities, that of Jupiter and Juno, is not only barren, but filled with dreadful quarrels. Thus, Jupiter suspends his chaste and jealous wife from a chain; while he himself gives birth to Minerva, who springs from his head. And finally, when Saturn begets children, he devours them.

Such examples are powerful examples of divinity; and they may even contain that complete esoteric wisdom which was desired in antiquity by Plato and in our own times by Francis Bacon in his Wisdom of the Ancients. But taken literally, they would debauch the most civilized peoples and incite them to indulge in the bestiality of Orpheus’ beasts. So suitable and powerful are they in reducing bestial people to humanity! In reproving the pagan gods, St Augustine’s City of God makes a small point regarding a scene in Terence’s The Eunuch. In the play, the youth Chaeareia is aroused by a painting of Jupiter copulating with Danae in a shower of gold: summoning up new-found boldness, he rapes the slave-girl who had inspired his mad and violent love.

Yet we may avoid these dangerous reefs of mythology by applying the principles of my New Science. For they show that all such myths were in their beginnings true, severe, and worthy of their nation’s founders. Yet later, as the years passed, their meanings were obscured, and human morality lapsed from severity into dissolution. To solve their consciences, people now sought to sin with the approval of the gods, and their myths developed the filthy meanings which they still have today.

The harsh tempests of chronology will in turn be calmed by our discovery of poetic archetypes. One of these is Orpheus, considered in his role as a theological poet. For in their original form, his myths founded and later confirmed the civilization of Greece. This role was particularly prominent in the contensions between the heroes and plebeians of the Greek cities. During this age, the theological poets distinguished themselves, among them Orpheus, Linus, Musaeus, and Amphion. With his song, Amphion moved the rocks—meaning the stupid plebeians—to build the walls of Thebes, which Cadmus had founded 300 years earlier. In precisely this way, about 300 years after the foundation of Rome, the Roman heroic state was reinforced when Appius Claudius, grandson of the decemvir, sang to the plebs about the divine power of the auspices, the science of which had previously been restricted to the patricians. It was from such heroic contentions that the heroic age took its name.

23 Hercules, culmination of the Greek heroic age

[82] We meet with the same difficulties if we regard Hercules as a real person who was Jason’s shipmate in the expedition to Colchis. Instead, his Twelve Labours reveal him as a heroic archetype of the founder of peoples.

24 Sanchuniathon writes history in vernacular letters

Year of the World 2800 (1205 BC)

[83] Sanchuniathon, sometimes called Sancnuates, is characterized as the ‘lover of truth’ in the Miscellanea of Clement of Alexandria. He wrote a Phoenician history in vernacular letters at a time when the Egyptians and Scythians were still writing in hieroglyphics. (The Chinese write in the same fashion even today, and like the Egyptians and Scythians boast of their prodigious antiquity. For they too have had no contact with other nations, and in their obscure isolation cannot see the true light of chronology.) Indeed, when Sanchuniathon was using Phoenician vernacular letters, the Greek vernacular alphabet had not yet been invented.
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25 The Trojan War
Year of the World 2820 (1185 BC)

[84] More cautious critics judge that the Trojan War never took place as it is described by Homer. And authors like Dictys of Crete and Dares of Phrygia, who wrote about the war in prose like later historians, are relegated by such critics to the Library of Impostures.

26 Sesostris rules in Thebes
Year of the World 2949 (1056 BC)

[85] Having subdued the other three dynasties in Egypt, Sesostris united them with his own empire. Sesostris proves to be the king Ramses described to Germanicus by the Egyptian priest in Tacitus’ history.

27 Greek colonies in Asia, Sicily, and Italy
Year of the World 2949 (1056 BC)

[86] Here is a rare case in which powerful evidence compels me to disregard chronological authority. I date the first Greek colonies in Italy and Sicily about a century after the Trojan War. This is some three centuries before the time established by chronologers, who instead assign to this period the wanderings of heroes like Menelaus, Aeneas, Antenor, Diomedes, and Ulysses. (This should surprise no one, since the same chronologers disagree by 460 years in their dating of Homer, the author closest to these affairs of the Greeks.) For by the time of the Punic Wars, the Sicilian colony of Syracuse rivalled even Athens in magnificence and refinement, and we know that luxurious and grandiose lifestyles reach the islands later than the mainland. And in his day, Livy pitted the Greek colony of Croton for its few inhabitants, who had once numbered several million.

ESTABLISHING PRINCIPLES

28 The Olympic games, first established by Hercules and later suspended, are reinstated by Iphitus [Iphitus].
Year of the World 3225 (782 BC)

[87] Whereas Hercules numbered the years by harvests, Iphitus instituted the solar year following the signs of the zodiac, which marks the beginning of the certain chronology of Greek history.

29 Founding of Rome
Year of Rome 1 (753 BC)

[88] St Augustine’s City of God cites a golden passage in Varro which, like the sun clearing away the clouds, disperses all the exaggerated notions ever held concerning the origins of Rome, and indeed of all the famous capitals of various nations. Varro writes that under her kings, who reigned for 250 years, Rome conquered more than twenty peoples, but extended her dominion by no more than twenty miles.

30 Homer, who lived before vernacular letters were invented and who never saw Egypt
Year of the World 3290; Year of Rome 35 (719/715 BC)

[89] Greek history has left this first light of Greece in the dark. For the two principal parts of history, geography and chronology, tell us nothing certain about his homeland or his age. Book 3 of my New Science will describe a Homer completely at odds with previous interpretations. Whoever he was, it is clear that he never saw Egypt. For in the Odyssey he says that, even with a north wind filling its sails, an unladen ship would take an entire day to sail from the mainland to the island where the Alexandrian lighthouse now stands! Nor had he seen Phoenicia. For in the Odyssey he says that Calypso’s island Ogygia was so far away that the winged god Hermes could reach it only with great difficulty. Now since Homer’s gods in the Iliad live on Mt Olympus in Greece,

* For Iphitus, traditional founder of the Olympic games, Vico mistakenly writes ‘Iphitus’.
he seems to imply that Ogygia is as far from Greece as, say, America is from Europe. We must conclude that if the Greeks of Homer’s day had traded in Phoenicia and Egypt, none of them would have believed either of his epics.

31 Psammetichus opens Egypt to the Ionian and Carian Greeks
Year of the World 3334 (671 BC)

[90] Beginning with the reign of Psammetichus, Herodotus begins to recount Egyptian history with greater certainty. The late date of Psammetichus confirms the view that Homer never saw Egypt. In some cases, Homer’s many statements about Egypt and other countries reflect Greek institutions and events, as we shall see in my Poetic Geography. In other cases, they are traditions which were modified over the years and brought to Greece by Phoenician, Egyptian, and Phrygian colonists. And in still others, they are the tales of Phoenician travellers who traded in Greek ports well before Homer’s time.

32 Aesop, popular moral philosopher
Year of the World 3334 (671 BC)

[91] My section on Poetic Logic will show that Aesop was not a real individual, but an imagined category, or poetic archetype, representing the heroes’ associates or family servants, who clearly lived before the Seven Sages of Greece.

33 Seven Sages of Greece: Solon establishes popular freedom in Athens, and Thales of Miletus introduces philosophy by his study of natural science
Year of the World 3406 (599 BC)

[92] Thales began with the inessential principle of water. Perhaps he had observed that water makes our gourds grow!

34 Pythagoras, whose very name (Livy tells us) was unknown in Rome during his lifetime
Year of the World 3468; Year of Rome 223 (537/539 BC)

[93] Far from believing that Pythagoras was Numa Pompilius’ teacher in divinity, Livy places him in the age of Servius Tullius, nearly two centuries later. Even in this age, inland Italy was so barbarous, Livy says, that it was impossible not only for Pythagoras, but even for his name, to reach Rome from Croton by passing through so many peoples with different languages and customs. We may imagine, then, how quickly and easily Pythagoras made those many long journeys to Orpheus’ disciples in Thrace, to the magi in Persia, to the Chaldaeans in Babylon, and to the gymnosophists in India! And we may imagine how, on his return trip, he visited the priests in Egypt, traversed the breadth of Africa to seeAtlas’ disciples in Mauretania, and then crossed the Mediterranean again to visit the Druids in Gaul! At last, Pythagoras returned to his homeland, rich in what Van Heurn calls barbarian wisdom from the barbarous nations to which, many years earlier, the Theban Hercules had brought civilization as he travelled the world slaying monsters and tyrants. These are the same nations which, many years later, the Greeks claimed to have civilized, but with so little success that they still remained barbarous. Such are the solemn and weighty foundations of Van Heurn’s succession of the schools of barbarian philosophy, which I mentioned earlier and which the concept of scholars has so vigorously applauded!

[94] What shall we say to the incontrovertible authority of Lactantius, who categorically denies that Pythagoras was a disciple of Isaiah? His authority gains force from a passage in the Jewish Antiquities of Josephus, which shows that in the ages of Homer and Pythagoras the Jews were unknown to their inland neighbours, let alone to distant nations overseas. In Josephus, when Ptolemy Philadelphus marvels that no poet or historian ever mentioned the laws of Moses, Demetrius the Jew replies that God had miraculously punished several men for trying to divulge these laws to the gentiles: Theopompos lost his mind, and Theocreates his sight. Commenting on this, Josephus himself generously confesses that the Jews lived in obscurity, and cites the following reasons: ‘We
do not inhabit the coast, and we take no pleasure in trade or in commercial dealings with foreigners.' Lactantius interprets the Jews' obscenity as a counsel of divine providence which prevented pagan commerce from profaning the religion of the true God. And in his Commonwealth of the Jews, Peter Canusetus agrees with Lactantius' view.

All of this is confirmed by the Jews' own public confession. In atonement for the Septuagint, or Old Testament in Greek, they observed an annual fast on the eighth day of Tebet, which is our December. For when this translation was published, darkness covered the earth for three days, according to the rabbinical books cited in Isaac Casaubon's Notes on Baroni's Annals, Johann Buxtorf's The Jewish Synagogue, and Johannes Hottinger's Philological Thesaurus. And since the so-called Hellenists, or Hellenized Jews—including Aristes, the supposed director of the translation—attributed divine authority to their work, they earned the mortal hatred of the Jews at Jerusalem.

[95] The very nature of their civil institutions made it impossible for the Jewish prophets to profane their sacred teaching to foreigners. And travel was nearly impossible. Even the civilized Egyptians closed their borders to the Jews. (The Egyptians were so inhospitable that, even after they opened their country to the Greeks, they were forbidden to use Greek pots, spits, and knives, and even to eat meat cut with a Greek knife.) The region was isolated by harsh and dangerous roads, peoples with no common language, and Jewish tribes whom the gentiles mocked, saying that they would not direct a thirsty stranger to a well. How then could the prophets reveal their sacred teaching to strange and unfamiliar foreigners, when in fact the priests of every nation kept their sacred teachings arcaneally hidden from the masses of their plebeians? This is why all nations refer to their religious doctrine as sacred, which is synonymous with secret.

The secrecy of Jewish teaching offers us luminous proof of the truth of the Christian religion. For both Pythagoras and Plato, by virtue of their sublime human wisdom, raised themselves some of the way towards understanding those divine truths which the Jews learned from the true God. And conversely, it soundly refutes the error of recent mythologists, who think that myths are sacred stories which have been corrupted by pagan nations, and especially by the Greeks. (To be sure, the Egyptians had dealings with the Jews during their captivity. But it is the common custom of early peoples to regard the vanquished as godless men. So, instead of respecting the religion and history of the Jews, the Egyptians ridiculed them. Indeed, the holy book of Genesis relates that the scornful Egyptians often asked the Jews why the god they worshipped did not deliver them from captivity.)

35 King Servius Tullius

Year of the World 3468; Year of Rome 225 (537/529 BC)

[96] A common error previously led scholars to believe that Servius Tullius instituted the Roman census as the basis of popular liberty, but I shall show that it was the basis of aristocratic liberty. And a related error previously led them to believe that Tarquinius Priscus introduced all the badges of Roman office—the ensigns, togas, devices, ivory thrones, and even the triumphal chariots of gold. It was in such splendid trappings that Roman majesty supposedly shone forth in the age of its most glorious democracy. Yet during Priscus' reign, a sick debtor, when summoned before the praetor, had to appear on an ass or in a cart! As for the ivory thrones, they were obviously made from the tusks of elephants, which the Romans called Lucanian oxen, because they first saw them in Lucania during the war with Pyrrhus, two centuries later!

36 Hesiod

Year of the World 3500 (525 BC)

[97] According to the proofs by which I date the invention of the vernacular Greek alphabet, I place Hesiod in the time of Herodotus, or slightly earlier. Some chronologists were overly confident in placing Hesiod thirty years before Homer: we must bear in mind that authorities differ by 460 years in their dating of Homer. By contrast, Porphyry (who is cited in Suidas) and Valerius Paternus maintain that Homer preceded Hesiod by many years. As for the tripod on Mt Helicon which Hesiod supposedly dedicated to Apollo, with the inscription that he had defeated Homer in song, despite Varro's endorsement in Aulus Gellius, we must store it in the Museum of Impostures. For it belongs
with the fakes perpetrated by today's counterfeitors of medals, who seek to reap a great profit from their deceptions.

37 Herodotus and Hippocrates
Year of the World 3500 (505 BC)

[98] Chronologers placed Hippocrates in the age of the Seven Sages of Greece. But his biography is heavily tinged with myths, one of which makes him the son of Aesculapius and the grandson of Apollo. By contrast, we know for certain that he wrote works in prose using the vernacular alphabet. For these two reasons, I date him to the age of Herodotus, who also wrote in prose using the vernacular alphabet, and who wrote nearly all of his history from myths.

38 Idanthrysus, king of Scythia
Year of the World 3530 (475 BC)

[99] When Darius the Great declared war on him, Idanthrysus replied by sending him five objects: a frog, a mouse, a bird, a ploughshare, and an archer's bow. The earliest peoples used such physical words before they used spoken and, eventually, written words. Later, I shall explain the natural meaning of these objects. For the moment, it would be pointless to repeat what St Cyril [Clement] of Alexandria relates of Darius' council, since he himself exposes how ludicrously they misinterpreted Idanthrysus' message. In any case, we should recall that Idanthrysus is the king of the Scythians, who supposedly surpassed the Egyptians in antiquity, but who at this late date were still unable to write, even in hieroglyphics!

Now, Idanthrus must have resembled one of those Chinese kings who until a few centuries ago were isolated from the rest of the world, and therefore vainly boasted of their superior antiquity. Despite their great antiquity, the Chinese today still write in hieroglyphics. Because of their mild climate, they have the most refined sensibilities, and are able to create the most amazingly delicate works of art. Yet their painters have not yet learned to highlight figures by shading them; and their paintings appear quite awkward because they lack relief and depth. Their porcelain statuettes, now commonly imported in Europe, reveal the same crudeness as the statues cast by the Egyptians, which suggests that the painting of the ancient Egyptians may have been as crude as that of today's Chinese.

[100] One of the ancient Scythians was Anacharsis [Abaris], who was reputed to be the author of Scythian oracles, as Zoroaster was of Chaldaean oracles. * At first, these must have been the oracles of soothsayers; but later, the conceit of scholars transformed them into the oracles of philosophers. Now, according to Herodotus, followed by Pindar, Phereinus, and Cicero in his On the Nature of the Gods, the most famous oracles of pagan antiquity — those of Delphi and Dodona — came to Greece from the Hyperboreans of Scythia, which may mean either modern-day Scythia or a northern region within ancient Greece. As a result, Anacharsis was celebrated as the famous author of oracles and numbered among the most ancient diviners, as we shall see in my Poetic Geography.

For a moment, let us consider how learned the Scythians were in esoteric wisdom. We need only cite their practice of sticking a knife in the ground and worshipping it as a god — an act by which they justified the killings they were going to commit. And this savage religion was supposedly the origin of the many moral and civil virtues which are described by Diodorus Siculus, Justinus, and Pliny, and extolled by Horace! Later, when Anacharsis sought to establish civilization in Scythia by introducing Greek laws, he was killed by his brother Caduids. So much did he profit from Van Heurn's barbarian philosophy that he was unable to conceive laws that could convert a barbarous people to humane civilization, and had to borrow them from the Greeks instead.

Thus, the relation of the Greeks to the Scythians is precisely the same as their relation to the Egyptians, which I described earlier. Indeed, for their vanity in tracing their wisdom from illustrious origins: in foreign antiquity, the Greeks merited the reproach of being told they were always children — as they imagined that an Egyptian priest reproached

* For Abanis, Vico mistakenly writes 'Anacharis'.
Solon, according to Critias in Plato’s *Akibidas*. We can only conclude that, by their concerted ties to the Scythians and Egyptians, the Greeks lost as much in true merit as they gained in vainglory.

39 *Peloponnesian War*. Thucydides writes that he decided to recount it because in his father’s day the Greeks knew nothing about their own antiquities.

*Year of the World 3530 (475 BC)*

[101] Thucydides was a youth when Herodotus, who could have been his father, was an old man. He lived in the most glorious age of Greece, that of the Peloponnesian War. As a contemporary witness, he wrote its history to record the truth about it. Thucydides notes that in his father’s day, which was the age of Herodotus, the Greeks knew nothing about their own antiquities. If that is the case, what shall we think about Greek accounts of foreign affairs, which are our only source for the antiquities of the pagan barbarians? And if Thucydides says this is true of the Greeks, who developed philosophy so early, what shall we think of the antiquities of the Romans, who until the Punic Wars were occupied solely with agriculture and warfare? Unless perhaps we choose to say that the Romans enjoyed the special privilege of God.

40 Socrates introduces rational moral philosophy. Plato excels in metaphysics. Athens radiant with all the arts of advanced civilization.

*Year of the World 3533; Year of Rome 303 (452/451 BC)*

[102] In this period, the Law of the Twelve Tables is supposedly brought to Rome from Athens. This was an uncivilized, crude, inhuman, cruel, and savage law, as my *Principles of Universal Law* demonstrated.

41 Bearing Greek arms into the heart of Persia, Xenophon is the first to learn about Persian institutions with any certainty.*

*Year of the World 3563; Year of Rome 333 (422/421 BC)*

[103] Jerome notes this in his *Commentary on Daniel*. The commercial interests of the Greeks introduced them to Egyptian affairs during the reign of Psammeticus, which is why Herodotus writes more accurately about the Egyptians from that time onwards. From Xenophon onwards, the necessities of warfare introduced the Greeks to Persian affairs at first-hand. Aristotle too, who accompanied Alexander the Great into Persia, writes that the Greeks before him had merely told myths about the Persians, as my Notes on Chronology indicate. In this manner, the Greeks began to gain more certain knowledge of foreign institutions.

42 Publilian Law

*Year of the World 3658; Year of Rome 416 (338 BC)*

[104] Passed in the Year of Rome 416 (338 BC), this law marked a turning-point in Roman history, for it proclaimed the shift of the Roman constitution from aristocracy to democracy. This is why its framers, Publilius Philo, was called ‘the people’s dictator’. Yet the importance of this law has been neglected because no one knew how to interpret its language. Later, I shall clearly show this for a fact; suffice it here to give a hypothetical idea of this law.

[105] Both the Publilian Law and its equally important successor, the Poetarian Law, were not understood because three key terms were ill-defined: people, kingdom, and liberty. By a common error, many scholars believed that the Roman people from the time of Romulus included as citizens both patricians and plebeians; that the original Roman state was a monarchial kingdom; and that the liberty established by Brutus was a form of popular liberty. These ill-defined terms have misled all previous critics, historians, political thinkers, and jurists. For no present-day commonwealth can give us an adequate idea of the heroic ones, which were of a severely aristocratic form and thus completely different from those in our day.

[106] In his refuge in the clearing, Romulus founded Rome by
means of clientships, dientelae, based on the protection which Roman fathers offered to those who sought asylum there. Hired as day labourers, such refugees had none of the privileges of citizenship and hence no share in civil liberty. Since they had taken refuge to save their lives, the Roman patrician fathers guaranteed their natural liberty by assigning them in separate groups to cultivate their various fields. These fields formed the basis of the public lands of the Roman territory, just as the patrician fathers, assembled by Romulus, formed the basis of the Roman senate.

[107] Later, Servius Tullius instituted the census by granting the labourers bovinary ownership of the patricians' lands. The labourers were to cultivate the land for themselves, under the burden of the census and under the obligation of serving the patricians in wartime at their own expense — just as the plebeians in fact served the patricians in the period of imaginary popular liberty. Servius Tullius' law was the first agrarian law in the world, and it established the census as the basis of the heroic commonwealths, which were the most ancient aristocracies in all nations.

[108] Subsequently, Junius Brutus drove out the tyrannical Tarquins, and restored the Roman republic to its original principles. Instead of a single lifelong king, he created two consuls to be a sort of annual pair of aristocratic kings, as Cicero calls them in his On Laws. In this way, Brutus re-established the patricians' liberty from tyrannical rulers, but not the plebeians' liberty from the patricians. Then, when the patricians failed to respect Servius' agrarian law, the plebeians created two tribunes of the people, whom the patricians had to swear to recognize. The tribunes were created to defend the natural liberty which the plebeians enjoyed through their bovinary ownership of the fields. Next, the plebeians sought to obtain the right of civil ownership from the patricians; and when Coriolanus told the plebeians to go till the fields, the tribunes of the people drove him out of Rome. For he meant that, if the plebeians were dissatisfied with Servius' agrarian law and wanted a stronger, more complete law, they ought to be reduced to the status of Romulus' day labourers. If this was not his meaning, what foolish pride would have led these plebeians to disdain agriculture, when we know for certain that even the patricians considered it an honourable profession? Or how could such a trivial motive have started such a cruel war? For to avenge his exile, Coriolanus marched on Rome, and would have destroyed it, if the pious tears of his mother and his wife had not dissuaded him from this impious enterprise.

[109] Still, the patricians continued to reclaim their fields after the plebeians had cultivated them, and the plebeians had no civil process for pressing their own claim. As a result, the tribunes of the people now demanded the passage of the Law of the Twelve Tables — which in fact only resolved this issue and no other, as I showed in my Principles of Universal Law. Under this law, the patricians now granted the plebeians 'quiritary' or citizen rights of ownership over their fields. Indeed, under the natural law of peoples, such civil ownership is granted even to foreigners. This was the second agrarian law of the nations of antiquity.

[110] But the plebeians realized that, despite their quiritary rights, they still could not bequeath the fields to their relations. For they could not make intestate bequests, since without celebrating solemn marriages, they had none of the relations through which legitimate succession could pass. (At the time, these relations were limited to direct heirs, suæ heredes; kinsmen on the father's side, agnates; and relatives through the clan, gentiles.) Nor could they dispose of fields by testament, since they lacked the rights of citizenship.

As a result, the plebeians asserted their claim to share the patricians' commonium, a term which meant the right to solemnized marriages. Now, the greatest solemnity of marriage was the auspices, which were both the exclusive domain of the patricians, and also the great source of all Roman law, both public and private. Hence, when the patricians granted solemnized marriage to the plebeians, they effectively granted them the rights of citizenship as well. (The jurist Modestinus defines marriage as the 'sharing of every divine and human right', omnis divini et humani iuris communitatis, which is tantamount to citizenship.) Then, following the natural progress of human desires, the plebeians secured from the patricians all those rights of private law which depended on the auspices: paternal authority, direct heirs, paternal kinsmen, and clan kinships. And by virtue of these rights, they further secured the rights to legitimate successions, testaments, and guardianships. Next, they claimed those rights of public law dependent on the auspices, first
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securing access to the consulship, with its attendant right to *imperium* or military command, and then to priesthoods and pontificates, with their attendant knowledge of the laws.

[111] In this manner, the tribunes of the people, who had been created as the basic defenders of their natural liberty, were gradually led to obtain for the plebeians all the rights of civil liberty. And the census instituted by Servius Tullius subsequently replaced the payments made privately to the patricians with taxes paid to the public treasury for disbursing monies to the plebeians in wartime. As a result, the census naturally developed from a basis of patrician liberty to a basis of popular liberty, as we shall later see in detail.

[112] With steady steps, the tribunes advanced in their power to make laws. Now, in fact, the Horatian and Hortensian Laws had only made the plebeians' plebiscites binding on the whole people during two particular crises. The first was the secession of the plebs to the Aventine hill in the Year of Rome 304 (459 BC), at a time when the plebeians were not yet citizens, as I assume here hypothetically and later show in fact. The second was the secession of the plebs to the Janiculum hill in the Year of Rome 367 (287 BC), at a time when the plebeians were still struggling to make the consuls share the consulship with them.

On the basis of the Pubilian and Poetelian Laws, the plebeians finally achieved the power to make laws that were universally binding. This must have led to great unrest and tumult in Rome, which necessitated the creation of Pubullus Philo as dictator. For a dictator was created only in times of great danger to the republic, and such was the case here. The Roman republic had fallen into such great disorder that within the body politic it nourished two supreme legislative powers without any distinction between them of time, competence, or territory. As a result, the republic soon faced certain ruin.

As a remedy for this civil malady, Pubullus Philo first ordained that whatever measures the plebeians approved by plebiscite in the tribal assemblies 'should be binding on all citizens', *omnes Quirites tenet*. By this, he meant all the people of the centuriae assemblies, in which all Roman citizens convened. (The Romans were termed *Quirites* only in public assemblies, and the singular form of the noun *Quiris* was never used in vernacular Latin conversation.) By this formula, Philo made clear that no laws could be passed that ran counter to the plebeians. Now, the patricians themselves had already consented to laws that made the plebeians their equals in every possible respect. But by Philo's recent reform, which the patricians could not oppose without endangering the republic, the plebeians became superior to the patriciate: for, even without the senate's approval, they could enact general laws for all the people. In this way, the Roman republic had naturally become a government of popular liberty. And when Pubullus Philo proclaimed the change by his law, he became known as the people's dictator.

[113] In keeping with this change, Philo added two ordinances which constitute the other two articles of his Pubilian Law. The first of these concerned the authority of the senate. Until then, the authority of the senate lay with the authority of the nobles. In other words, the patricians had to ratify whatever measures the people had approved: this is the origin of the Roman formula 'Let the fathers give their authority', *deinde patres fierent auctores*. As a result, the popular election of consuls had merely been a public testimonial of the candidates' merit, and the popular enactment of laws merely a public call for legal action. But as dictator, Philo ordained that henceforth the patricians must grant authority to the people, now free and sovereign, before a vote was taken in the assemblies, *in iunctum consitium eventum*. In other words, the patriciate acted as the guardians of the people, who were the true lords of the Roman *imperium*, or supreme authority. If the people wished to enact laws, they could enact them using the wording offered them by the senate. If not, they could exercise their sovereign will and 'antiquate' the senate proposals, that is, declare that they wanted no new laws. This meant that all future decrees of the senate concerning public affairs would either be the senate's *instructions* to the people, or the people's *commissions* to the senate.

To conclude, Philo's last article concerned the census. In the past, the public treasury had been managed by the patricians, and only patricians could be made censors. But since this law made the treasury the property of the entire people, Philo's third article opened the censorship to the plebeians, the last magistracy in which they had not shared.
If we adopt this hypothesis as the basis for our reading of Roman history, we shall find countless proofs that it underlies all the events narrated in that history. As long as the terms people, kingdom, and liberty are poorly defined, such events reveal no common foundation or particular connections. This alone would confirm the truth of my hypothesis. But on closer examination, my model proves to be not so much a hypothesis as a truth, contemplated in ideal form and proved factual by historical authorities. And if we further accept Livy’s general statement that refuges were the ancient counsel of city founders – like Romulus’ foundation of Rome in the refuge in the clearing – then my model reveals the histories of all the other cities of the world, which we previously despair of knowing. This is a sample of the ideal eternal history, contemplated in my Science, through which the histories of all nations must in time pass.

43 Poetelian Law
Year of the World 3661; Year of Rome 419 (335 BC)

The Poetelian Law on imprisonment for debt, de nexu, was enacted in the Year of Rome 419 (335 BC) by the consuls Gaius Poetelius and Lucius Papirius Mugilamius, just three years after the Publilian Law. It marks another turning-point in the history of Roman institutions. For it released the plebeians from feudal liability for debt, which previously had made them liege vassals of the patricians and compelled them to labour in their private prisons, often for life.

Even so, the senate retained its sovereign dominion over the lands under Roman authority, even though this authority itself had already passed to the people. And as long as the Roman republic was free, the senate could pass a declaration of public emergency – the ‘senatorial decree of last resort’, senatus consultum ultimum – to maintain their dominion by force of arms. Hence, when the people tried to reassign these lands under the agrarian laws of the Gracchi, the senate armed the consuls, who then declared the people’s tribunes to be rebels and killed them as the instigators of this reform. Such a drastic measure was only possible because the rights of sovereign feuds were subject to a higher sovereignty. This is confirmed by a passage in one of Cicero’s speeches against Catiline, where he affirms that the agrarian law of Tiberius Gracchus was undermining the constitution of the republic. Hence, in putting him to death, Publius Scipio Nasica was justified by the right stated in the legal formula by which, as consul, he armed the people against the framers of this law: ‘If anyone seeks to save the republic, let him follow the consul’: Qui rei publicae salutem velit, consulium sequatur.

44 War with Tarentum, in which the Greeks and Romans began to know each other
Year of the World 3708; Year of Rome 489 (282 BC)

This war started when the people of Tarentum insulted both some Roman ships that had landed on their shores, and a subsequent Roman embassy. The people of Tarentum offered the excuse, cited by Florus, that ‘they were unaware who these people were or whence they came’. So little did the earliest peoples know of each other, even when living on the same small peninsula!

45 Second Punic War, the first certain part of the Roman history of Livy, who yet declares his ignorance of three important facts
Year of the World 3649; Year of Rome 552 (216–202 BC)

Livy declared that, beginning with the second Punic War, he would write his history of Rome with greater certainty, and he promised to narrate that war as the most memorable in Roman history. And the incomparable greatness of that war should have lent his annals the certainty that attends the most famous events. Yet Livy openly admits his ignorance of three important facts. First, he does not know in whose consulship Hannibal marched from Spain to Italy, after taking Saguntum. Second, he does not know where Hannibal crossed the Alps, whether in the Cottine or the Pennine range. Third, he does not know the size of Hannibal’s army. For he found great variance in the ancient annals, in which some wrote 6,000 cavalry and 20,000 infantry, and others 20,000 cavalry and 80,000 infantry.
Conclusion

[118] All of these Notes make clear that everything we know about the ancient pagan nations, in the period shown on my Table, is completely uncertain. I have entered what is virtually unclaimed territory, in which the law grants rights to the occupant, occupans concessit. Hence, I believe I am violating no one else's rights, if my account of the origins of national civilizations differs from and even contradicts those of previous scholars. For I am seeking scientific principles which will explain the origins of certain known historical facts, and give them a solid and coherent historical basis. For in previous studies, they have revealed no common foundation, no continuity of sequence, and no coherence among themselves.

SECTION 2
 ELEMENTS

[119] To organize the material outlined in the Chronological Table, I propose here the following axioms, both philosophically and philologically in nature, as well as some modest rational postulates and some elucidating definitions. Like the life-blood of a living creature, these principles run throughout my Science and enliven every part of my discussion of the common nature of nations.

[120] By its nature, the human mind is indeterminate; hence, when man is sunk in ignorance, he makes himself the measure of the universe.

[121] This axiom explains two common human customs: first, that rumour grows as it spreads, fama crescit eundo; and second, that presence diminishes rumour, minuit prae sentia faman. Now, since the world began, rumour has travelled a very long way, and so has been the inexhaustible source of all the grandiose opinions which people have previously entertained about remote and unknown antiquities. This is due to that property of the human mind which Tacitus in his Life of Agricola describes in his aphorism 'Whatever is unknown is thought grandiose', Omne ignotum pro magnifice est.
[123] Another property of the human mind is that, when people can form no idea of distant and unfamiliar things, they judge them by what is present and familiar.

[124] This axiom indicates the inexhaustible source of all the erroneous views which entire nations and all scholars have entertained concerning the beginnings of civilization. For when nations first became aware of their origins, and scholars first studied them, they judged them according to the enlightenment, refinement, and magnificence of their age, when in fact by their very nature these origins must rather have been small, crude, and obscure.

[125] In this category, we may place the two kinds of conceit mentioned earlier: the conceit of nations, and the conceit of scholars.

[126] On the conceit of nations, we have seen the golden saying of Diodorus Siculus, who writes that all the nations, both Greek and barbarian, think they were the very first to invent the comforts of human life, and that they preserve memories of their history from the beginning of the world.

[127] This axiom instantly dispels the vainglory of the Chaldaeans, Scythians, Egyptians, and Chinese, who claim that they founded the first civilization of the ancient world. By contrast, the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus exonerates his own nation by generously admitting that the Jews lived hidden from all the pagan nations. Indeed, the Bible assures us that the world is quite young when compared to the hoary age with which it has been credited by the Chaldaeans, Scythians, Egyptians, and even today by the Chinese. This is an important proof of the truth of the Bible.

[128] In addition to the conceit of nations, there is the conceit of scholars, who assert that what they know is as old as the world.

[129] This axiom dispels the opinions of all the scholars who have praised the incomparable wisdom of the ancients. And it proves that the oracles of Zoroaster the Chaldaean, the lost oracles of Anacharsis the Scythian, the Priscian of Hermes Trismegistus, the Orphica (or Hymnus of Orpheus), and the Golden Verses of Pythagoras were impostures, as all astute critics agree. It also exposes the absurdity of all the mystical senses which scholars have read into Egyptian hieroglyphics, and all the philosophical allegories they have read into Greek myths.

[130] If philosophy is to benefit humankind, it must raise and support us as frail and fallen beings, rather than strip us of our nature or abandon us in our corruption.

[131] This axiom expels two sects from the school of my New Science: the Stoics, who tell us to mortify our senses; and the Epicureans, who make them the rule of life. Both of them deny providence. The Stoics let themselves be dragged by fate; whereas the Epicureans abandon themselves to chance, and even affirm that the human soul perishes with the body. And so they both deserve to be called monastic or solitary philosophers.

By contrast, this axiom admits to our school the political philosophers, especially the Platonists. For they agree with all legislators on three principal points: that divine providence exists, that human emotions should be moderated to become human virtues, and that human souls are immortal. This axiom thus offers us the three central principles of my New Science: providence, marriage, and burial.
[131] Philosophy considers people as they should be, and hence is useful only to the very few who want to live in the republic of Plato, rather than to sink into the dregs of Romulus.

[112] Legislation considers people as they really are, in order to direct them to good purposes in society. Out of ferocity, avarice, and ambition, the three vices which plague the entire human race, it creates armies, trade, and courts, which form the might, affluence, and wisdom of commonwealths. Thus, from three great vices, which otherwise would certainly destroy all the people on the earth, legislation creates civil happiness.

[133] This axiom proves that divine providence exists and that it acts as a divine legislative mind. For out of the passions of people intent on their personal advantage, which might cause them to live as wild and solitary beasts, it makes civil institutions which keep them within human society.

[134] Outside their natural state, things can neither settle nor endure.

[135] Since from time immemorial the human race has lived harmoniously in society, this single axiom resolves the great question of whether law exists in nature, or whether human nature is sociable — which is the same thing. Our greatest philosophers and moral theologians are still debating the point against the skeptic Carneades and against Epicurus; and not even Grotius has resolved the question.

[136] Axioms 7–8 prove that man has free volition to turn his passions into virtues. But since his will is weak, he must be aided by God, who acts naturally as divine providence and supernaturally as divine grace.

[137] When people cannot know the truth, they strive to follow what is certain and defined. In this way, even if their intellect cannot be satisfied by abstract knowledge, scienza, at least their will may repose in common knowledge, coscienza.

[138] Philosophy contemplates reason, from which we derive our abstract knowledge of what is true. Philology observes the creative authorship and authority of human volition, from which we derive our common knowledge of what is certain.

[139] The second half of this axiom defines as philologists all the grammarians, historians, and critics who have contributed to our awareness of peoples' languages and deeds, including both their domestic customs and laws, and their foreign wars, peace, pacts, travels, and trade.

[140] This axiom also shows how the philosophers and the philologists have failed each other. The philosophers should have used the philologists' authority to certify their reasoning, and the philologists should have used the philosophers' reasoning to verify their authorities. If they had done this, they would have done more good to our commonwealths, and they would have anticipated my conception of the New Science.

[141] Since human judgment is by nature uncertain, it gains certainty from our common sense about what is necessary and useful to human-kind; and necessity and utility are the two sources of the natural law of nations.
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12

[142] Common sense is an unreflecting judgment shared by an entire social order, people, nation, or even all humankind.

[143] Together with the following definition, this axiom establishes a new art of criticism concerning the founders of the nations, who lived more than a thousand years before those writers with whom previous criticism has dealt.

13

[144] When uniform ideas arise in entire nations which are unknown to each other, they must have a common ground of truth.

[145] This axiom is an important principle. For it establishes that mankind's common sense is a criterion which divine providence teaches peoples to aid them in defining what is certain in the natural law of nations. They arrive at this certainty by looking beyond local variations in this law to recognize its essential unities, on which they all agree. From these unities, we may derive a conceptual dictionary which traces the origins of all the various articulate languages. By using this dictionary, we may conceive the ideal eternal history which describes the histories of all nations through time. (See Axiom 22 below for this conceptual dictionary, and Axiom 68 for ideal eternal history.)

[146] This same axiom demolishes all previous ideas about the natural law of the nations, which was believed to have originated first in one nation, from which it was later adopted by others. This seductive error was promoted by the Egyptians and Greeks, who vainly boasted that they had sown the seeds of civilization throughout the world. And it was clearly the source of the myth that the Law of the Twelve Tables was brought to Rome from Greece. But in that case, it would have been a civil law which human provision then communicated to other peoples, rather than a law which divine providence established naturally in all nations, together with their civilized customs. One of the recurrent tasks of my Science is to show that the natural law of nations arose separately among various peoples who knew nothing of each other.

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14

Only later, on occasions involving wars, embassies, pacts, and trade, was it recognized as common to all humankind.

15

[147] The nature of an institution is identical with its nascence at a certain time and in a certain manner. When these are the same, similar institutions will arise.

16

[148] The inherent properties of things are produced by the mode or manner in which they arise. Such properties therefore allow us to verify an institution's exact nature and nascence.

17

[149] Popular traditions always have a public ground of truth, which explains their birth and their preservation for many years by entire peoples.

[150] Another great task of my New Science is to discover these grounds of truth, even when the passage of time and the subsequent changes in languages and customs have enveloped the truth in falsehood.

18

[151] Vernacular expressions are invaluable witnesses to the customs current among ancient peoples as their languages were forming.

19

[152] Any language of an ancient nation which has developed with complete autonomy provides an important witness to the customs of the world's earliest ages.

[153] This axiom assures us that Latin figures of speech afford the
weightiest philological proofs of the natural law of the nations. (And no one doubts that of all the nations the Romans were the wisest in that law.) For the same reason, scholars may use the German language in the same way, since it shares this property with Latin.

19

[154] Since the Law of the Twelve Tables reflects the customs of the peoples of Latium, it is an important witness to the ancient natural law of the Latin tribes. For while these customs, which arose in the age of Saturn, were variable elsewhere, at Rome they were inscribed on bronze tablets and religiously guarded by Roman jurists.

[155] Many years ago, I showed that this was true in my Principles of Universal Law, and my New Science will shed new light on the question.

20

[156] Since Homer's epics are civil histories of ancient Greek customs, they prove to be two great treasuries of the natural law of the Greek tribes.

[157] This axiom, simply posited here, will later be shown to be true in fact.

21

[158] The Greek philosophers accelerated the natural course of their nation's development. They appeared when the Greeks were still in a state of crude barbarism, and quickly led them to great sophistication, while preserving intact all their myths about the gods and heroes. By contrast, although the customs of the Romans progressed at a more reasonable pace, they completely lost sight of the history of their gods. (This is why what the Egyptians called the age of the gods is called by Varro the Romans' dark age.) But in their vernacular speech, the Romans preserved the heroic part of their history, which extends from Romulus to the Pubilian and Poetician Laws, and which is an unbroken historical mythology which parallels the Greek heroic age.

82

ESTABLISHING PRINCIPLES

[159] This overlapping nature of human institutions is confirmed by the history of the French nation. The middle of the barbarous twelfth century witnessed the opening of the famous Parisian school where Peter Lombard, the famous Master of Sentences, set about teaching the subtleties of Scholastic theology. Yet the same age preserved the history written by Bishop Turpin of Paris—which, like a Homeric epic, is filled with myths about the paladins or heroes of France who were to figure in so many later romances and poems. This precocious transition from barbarism to the subtlest sciences made French a very refined language. Indeed, of all the living languages, French alone seems to have revived the Attic subtlety of the Greeks, and is the language best suited to scientific discourse. At the same time, like Greek, French retains many diphthongs, the mark of a barbarous language that is still unwieldy and combines consonants and vowels with difficulty.

An observation concerning young people will confirm these remarks about Greek and French. At the age when young people possess vigorous memory, vivid imagination, and ardent inspiration, they may profitably study languages and plane geometry without subduing that crudity, typical of minds governed by the body, which we may call the barbarism of the intellect. But if they advance, while still in this immature stage, to very subtle subjects like metaphysics and algebra, they become finicky in their mental habits, and so are rendered unfit for more important tasks.

[160] As I pondered my New Science, I discovered another reason, perhaps a more decisive one, for the peculiar development of Rome. When Romulus founded Rome in the midst of more ancient cities in Latium, he did so by opening a refuge, an act which Livy defines in a general way as 'the ancient counsel of city founders'. Since violence was still widespread, Romulus naturally established the city of Rome on the same basis as the world's earliest cities. Roman customs thus developed from primitive beginnings in an age when the vernacular dialects of Latium were already well advanced. As a result, the Romans used vernacular language to refer to their civil institutions, just as the Greeks had used heroic language to refer to theirs. Ancient Roman history thus offers us an unbroken mythology which parallels Greek heroic history. This explains why the Romans became the heroes of
the world. Rome subdued the other cities of Latium, then the entire
Italian peninsula, and finally the world. For among the Romans, the
heroic spirit was still young, whereas it was already in decline among
the other Latin peoples, whose conquest prepared the way for Roman
greatness.

[161] The nature of human institutions presupposes a conceptual lan-
guage which is common to all nations. This language uniformly grasps
the substance of all the elements of human society, but expresses them
differently according to their different aspects. We witness the truth of
this in proverbs, which are maxims of popular wisdom. For their
meanings, while substantially the same, are expressed under as many
different aspects as there are ancient and modern nations.

[162] This language is central to my New Science; and by studying
it, language scholars will be able to compile a Conceptual Dictionary
embracing all the different articulate languages, both living and dead.
In the first edition of my New Science, I gave a specific example of this
dictionary. Drawing on a large number of living and dead languages, I
showed how the names given to family fathers reflected the different
attributes they had in the earliest families and commonwealths, in the
age when national languages were being formed. As far as my limited
learning permits, I shall apply this dictionary to all the topics discussed
in my Science.

[163] Let us review the preceding propositions. Axioms 1–4 offer
us fundamental principles that refute all previous notions about the
origins of civilization, exposing what is improbable, absurd, contradic-
tory, and impossible in them. Axioms 5–15 offer fundamental principles
of truth, which allow us to contemplate the world of nations in its
eternal and ideal form. This is the essential property of every science,
as Aristotle observed when he wrote that a science should treat what
is universal and eternal, scientia debet esse de universalibus et aeternis. Axioms
16–22 offer fundamental principles of certainty, which we shall use to
interpret the world of nations in its historical reality, just as we have
contemplated it in its ideal form. This follows the rigorous philosophical
method of Francis Bacon, which I have transferred from the natural
phenomena studied in his Thoughts and Conclusions on Nature to our
human civil institutions.

[164] The preceding axioms are general and establish principles for
my entire Science. The axioms which follow are specific and offer a
basis for its discussion of particular subjects.

[165] The sacred history of the Bible is more ancient than all the secular
histories that survive. For it recounts, in great detail and over a period
of more than 800 years, the state of nature under the patriarchs. This
was the state of families, from which peoples and cities later developed,
as all political thinkers agree. By contrast, secular history recounts little
or nothing about this state, and what little it recounts is quite confused.

[166] This axiom proves the truth of biblical history, by contrast to
the conceit of nations, as described by Diodorus Siculus. For the Jews
have preserved their traditions in great detail from the beginning of the
world.

[167] The true God founded Judaism on the prohibition of divination.
By contrast, all the pagan nations sprang from the practice of divination.

[168] This axiom is one of the principal reasons why the world of
ancient nations was divided into Jews and pagans.

[169] The fact of the universal flood is not proved by the philological
and historical arguments of Martin Schoock, which are too flimsy. Nor
is it proved by the astrological evidence of Pierre d’Ailly, who is followed
by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. This evidence is uncertain, and even
false, since it relies on the Alphonsine Tables, which were later refuted
by Jewish and then Christian scholars, who reject the calculations of
Eusebius and Bede, and follow instead the Jewish historian Philo.
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Instead, the fact of the flood can be proved by the references to natural history contained in myths, as the following axioms will make clear.

26

[170] The giants by nature had enormous bodies. They must have resembled the grotesque savages whom travellers at the foot of South America say they found in Patagonia, the land named for these Patagones, or Big Feet. In accounting for giants, we may dismiss as groundless, inappropriate, or simply false the causes cited by the philosophers, which have been assembled and approved by Jean Chassagnon in his treatise On Giants. We should instead cite the causes, both physical and moral, noted by Caesar and Tacitus in describing the gigantic stature of the ancient Germans. In my view, these causes derive from the brutish upbringing of their children.

27

[171] The flood and the giants are the starting-point of Greek history, which is our source for all pagan antiquity, with the exception of the Romans.

[172] Axioms 26 and 27 make it clear that humankind was at first divided into two kinds of people: the giants, or the pagans; and the people of normal build, or the Jews. This must reflect the difference between the brutish upbringing of the pagans and the human education of the Jews, which shows that the origin of the Jews was different from that of the pagans.

28

[173] Two great fragments of Egyptian antiquity have come down to us. First, the Egyptians divided the entire history of the world into three ages: the age of gods, the age of heroes, and the age of men. Second, during each of these three ages, a corresponding language was spoken: the hieroglyphic or sacred language; the symbolic or metaphorical language (which was heroic); and the epistolary or vernacular language of men, using conventional signs to communicate the everyday needs of life.

[174] Homer clearly spoke a heroic language; but five passages in his two epics mention a more ancient language, which he calls the language of the gods.

29

[175] The diligent Varro collected 30,000 names of gods, for the Greeks counted that many. They referred to an equal number of needs in the natural, moral, economic, and civil life of the earliest ages.

[176] Axioms 28–30 establish the fact that the world of peoples began everywhere with religion. This is the first of the three basic principles of my New Science.

30

[177] Once warfare has made a people so fierce that human laws no longer have a place among them, religion is the only means powerful enough to subdue them.

[178] This axiom establishes that divine providence initiated the process by which fierce and violent men were led from their lawless condition to enter civilization and create nations. Providence did this by awakening in them a confused idea of divinity, which in their ignorance they ascribed to objects incompatible with the divine. Still, in their fear of this imaginary divinity, they began to create some order in their lives.

[179] In his own fierce and violent men, Thomas Hobbes failed to see this providential origin of human institutions. For in seeking his basic principles, he went astray, led by the chance of his admired Epicurus. As result, his conclusions were as unfortunate as his undertaking was noble. For Hobbes intended to add a great supplement to Greek philosophy by considering man within the whole society of the
human race—something which was certainly lacking, as George Pash
notes in *Learned Discoveries in this Century*. This would not have occurred
to Hobbes if he had not been moved by the Christian religion, which
commands us to practise not only justice but charity towards all human-
kind. Here we may begin to refute Polybius’ false dictum that ‘if the
world had philosophers, it would not need religions’. In fact, without
religion there would be no commonwealths; and without common-
wealths, the world would have no philosophers.

[180] When people are ignorant of the natural causes that produce
things, and cannot even explain them in terms of similar things, they
attribute their own nature to them. For example, the masses say that a
magnet ‘loves’ iron.

[181] This axiom is a smaller part of Axiom 1: ‘By its nature,
the human mind is indeterminate; hence, whenever man is sunk in
ignorance, he makes himself the measure of the universe.’

[182] The natural science of the ignorant is a sort of popular metaphysics,
which explains the unknown in terms of God’s will without considering
the means he uses.

[183] Tacitus notes one of the true properties of human nature when
he writes ‘once struck with fear, minds are prone to superstition’: *mobiles
ad superstitionem perculsae senel mentes*. For once men are overcome by
a fearful superstition, they associate it with all that they imagine, see,
or even do.

[184] Wonder is the daughter of ignorance. The greater the cause
inspiring it, the greater the wonder.

[185] The weaker its power of reasoning, the more vigorous the human
imagination grows.

[186] The sublimest task of poetry is to attribute sense and emotion to
insensate objects. It is characteristic of children to pick up inanimate
objects and to talk to them in their play as if they were living persons.

[187] This philological and philosophical axiom shows us that people
living in the world’s childhood were by nature sublime poets.

[188] There is a golden passage in Lactantius which describes the origins
of idolatry: ‘At first, primitive men called their kings gods, either for
their miraculous valour, which these primitive and simple folk truly
believed miraculous; or, as is customary, in wonder at their manifest
power; or else for those benefits which had united them in civilization.’

[189] Curiosity is an inborn human trait which is the daughter of
ignorance and the mother of knowledge. Once wonder has opened
our minds, curiosity has this habit: observing an extraordinary natural
phenomenon—such as a comet, a parhelion, or a star at noon—our
curiosity asks at once what it can mean or signify.
[190] Witches, who are full of fearful superstitions, are also extremely savage and monstrous. When the solemn rites of their witchcraft require it, they will heartlessly kill and dismember even darling and innocent babies.

[191] Axioms 28–38 reveal the origins of divine poetry, meaning poetic theology. Axioms 31–40 show us the origins of idolatry; Axioms 39–40, the origins of divination; and Axiom 40, the origins of sacrifice in bloody religions. Among the first crude and savage people, such sacrifices began with vows and human victims. From Plautus, we learn that the Romans called these Saturn's victims, *Saturni hostiae*. They correspond to the sacrifices made to Moloch by the Phoenicians, who consecrated children to their false deity and then cast them into the fire. Similar sacrifices are recorded in the Law of the Twelve Tables.

Such institutions point to the proper meaning of Statius' verse 'Fear created the world's first gods', *Primas in orbe deos facit timor*. Indeed, false religions were born of people's own credulity, rather than the impostures of others. Yet despite Lucretius' impious exclamation – 'Such great evils could religion urge', *Tantum religio potuit suadere malum* – Agamemnon's unfortunate vow and his sacrifice of his pious daughter Iphigenia yet reflect the counsel of providence. For it took obedience to such fearful religions to tame the descendants of the Cyclopes and to lead them to the humanity of men like Aristides, Socrates, Laelius, and Scipio Africanus.

[192] We may reasonably postulate that for several centuries the earth was drenched with the water of the universal flood, and thus could not send into the air any dry exhalations or flammable matter that might have generated lightning.

[193] Every pagan nation had a Jupiter, who hurled his lightning bolts and laid low the giants.

[194] This axiom contains the natural history, preserved in myths, that the universal flood covered the whole earth.

[195] Axioms 41 and 42 establish that the impious races who descended from Noah's three sons lived in a brutish state for many years. Wandering like beasts, they were scattered and dispersed throughout the earth's great forest. And because of their brutish upbringing, they produced giants in the age when the heavens thundered for the first time since the flood.

[196] Every pagan nation had its own Hercules, the son of Jupiter. Varro, the greatest scholar of antiquities, counted as many as forty of them.

[197] This axiom refers to the beginning of heroism among the first peoples, which was born of the false opinion that heroes were of divine origin.

[198] Axioms 42 and 43 explain the existence among the pagan nations of so many Jupiters, and later of so many Herculean heroes. And they prove that these nations could neither be founded without religion, nor grow without virtue. Now, at their origin these nations were savage and isolated, and therefore knew nothing of one another. But Axiom 13 states that when uniform ideas arise among peoples unknown to each other, they must have a common ground of truth. Hence, these axioms offer us this important principle: that the earliest myths must have contained civil truths, and therefore must have been the histories of the earliest peoples.

[199] The first wise men of the Greek world were theological poets, who clearly flourished before the heroic poets, just as divine Jupiter was the father of heroic Hercules.
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[200] Axioms 42–44 establish that all the pagan nations were poetic in their origins, since each had its own Jupiter and its own Hercules. Among them, divine poetry arose first, and later heroic poetry.

45

[201] People tend naturally to preserve the memory of the laws and social orders that keep them within society.

46

[202] All the histories of barbarous peoples have mythical origins.

[203] Axioms 42–46 offer us the origin of our historical mythology.

47

[204] The human mind naturally tends to take delight in what is uniform.

[205] As regards myths, this axiom is confirmed by the custom of the masses. For when they consider famous people, noted for certain things and living in a certain context, they create myths which are appropriate to these conditions. These myths are ideal truths, since they truly conform to the merit of the figures they celebrate. And if they are sometimes false in fact, it is only to the extent that they inadequately recognize such merit. Indeed, if we consider the question carefully, poetic truth is metaphysical truth; and any physical truth which does not conform to it must be judged false. From this, we derive an important observation concerning poetic theory. Take Godfrey of Bouillon as Terquato Tasso imagines him. He is the true military commander, and all commanders who do not entirely conform to this Godfrey are not true ones.

48

[206] By nature, children retain their ideas and names of the people and things they have known first, and later apply them to others they meet who bear a resemblance or relation to the first.

ESTABLISHING PRINCIPLES

49

[207] In a golden passage of On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, lamblichus says that the Egyptians attributed to Hermes Trismegistus all the inventions that were useful or necessary to human life.

[208] Axioms 48 and 49 completely overturn all the senses of sublime natural theology which the divine Lamblichus ascribed to the mysteries of the Egyptians.

[209] Axioms 47–49 show us the origin of the poetic archetypes which constitute the essence of the myths. Axiom 47 describes the natural inclination of the masses to invent myths, and to invent them with the propriety of poetic decorum. Axiom 48 proves that the earliest men, as the children of the human race, were unable to conceive rational categories of things, and thus felt a natural need to invent poetic archetypes. These archetypes were imaginative categories or universals, to which (like ideal models or portraits) men could assign all the particular species that resembled them. And by virtue of this resemblance, ancient myths were invented with propriety. In precisely this way, the Egyptians assigned to the general category of the 'civil wise man' all the inventions useful or necessary to human life, which are the particular products of civil wisdom. But since they could not abstract the intelligible category of a civil wise man, let alone the idea of civil wisdom in which such Egyptians excelled, they imagined the figure of Hermes Trismegistus. Thus, in an age in which they enriched the world with inventions useful and necessary to mankind, we see how little the Egyptians as philosophers could grasp universals or intelligible categories!

[210] Axioms 47–49 also give us the principle of true poetic allegories. Such allegories gave myths meanings, based on identity rather than analogy, for various particulars comprised under poetic general categories. This is why in Latin allegories were called diversitas, different speeches: that is, expressions which reduce diverse species of men, deeds, and things to one general concept.
Children possess a very vigorous memory, and thus have an excessively vivid imagination; for imagination is simply expanded or compounded memory. This axiom is the principle of the vividness of the poetic images which the world must have formed in its early childhood.

In every endeavour but poetry, people with no natural gift can still succeed by diligent study of an art; but in poetry, no one who lacks the natural gift can possibly succeed through art. This axiom proves that the first poets were natural poets, for poetry laid the foundation of pagan civilization, which in turn was the sole source of all the arts.

Children excel in imitation, and we see that they generally play by copying whatever they are capable of understanding. This axiom shows that the world in its childhood was made up of poetic nations, for poetry is simply imitation. This axiom gives us another principle. All the arts serving human need, advantage, comfort, and, to a great extent, even pleasure were invented in the poetic centuries, before philosophers appeared. For the arts are simply imitations of nature and are, in a certain sense, concrete poetry.

People first feel things without noticing them, then notice them with inner distress and disturbance, and finally reflect on them with a clear mind. This axiom is the first principle of poetic statements, which are formed by feelings of passion and emotion. By contrast, philosophical statements are formed by reflection and reasoning. Philosophical statements approach the truth as they ascend to universality. Poetic statements gain certainty as they descend to particulars.

People naturally interpret doubtful or obscure matters affecting them according to their own nature, with its passions and customs. This axiom offers an important standard for our study of mythology. It means that all the myths invented by the first savage and crude people were interpreted severely, as befitted nations emerging from fierce and bestial freedom. Later, with the passage of many years and changes in customs, the myths lost their proper meaning, and were altered and obscured in the dissolute and corrupt age that preceded Homer. Yet religion still mattered to the Greeks, and they feared that the gods would prove contrary to their prayers if divine morals were contrary to their own. So the Greeks imputed their own customs to the gods, and thus gave foul, filthy, and obscene meanings to their myths.

There is a golden passage in Eusebius, whose description of the Egyptians' wisdom may be generalized to apply to all pagan nations: 'The Egyptians first theology was merely a history with interpolated myths. When later generations felt ashamed of these myths, they began gradually to supply them with invented mystical meanings.' This was also done by the Egyptian high priest Manetho, who converted all of Egyptian history into a sublime natural theology.

Axioms 54 and 55 are two great proofs of my historical mythology. They are two mighty whirlwinds that dispel notions of the incomparable wisdom of the ancients. And at the same time, they are two great foundations of the truth of the Christian religion; for biblical history contains no stories which cause us to feel shame.
[224] Among the Near Eastern peoples, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, we find that the first authors were poets, as were the first writers of the new European languages during the medieval return of barbarism.

[235] Mute people express themselves by using gestures or objects which bear a natural relation to the ideas they wish to signify.

[226] This axiom is the principle of hieroglyphs, which we find all nations used in speaking during their early barbarism.

[227] This axiom is also the principle of the natural speech once spoken in the world, as Plato conjectured in his Cretius, and after him Iamblichus in his Mysteries of the Egyptians. This view was shared by the Stoics and by Origen in his Against Celsius. But since it was merely a conjecture, it was rejected by Aristotle in his On Interpretation and by Galen in his Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato. In Aulus Gellius, we find Publius Nigidius discussing the question. This natural speech was succeeded by the poetic style which used images, similes, comparisons, and the natural properties of things.

[238] Mute people can utter crude vowels by singing, just as by singing stammerers can overcome their impediment and articulate consonants.

[229] People vent strong passions by breaking into song, as we see in people who are overcome by grief or joy.

[230] Axioms 58 and 59 allow us to conjecture that the authors of the pagan nations must have formed their first languages by singing. For they had fallen into the brutish state of mute beasts, and in such dull-witted creatures only the stimulus of violent passions could have awakened consciousness.

[231] Languages must have begun with monosyllabic words. For even though children today are born amid a wealth of articulate languages, and they have very supple organs for articulating speech, they still begin with monosyllables.

[232] Heroic verse in hexameters is the oldest of all, and spondees are the slowest metre. Later I shall show that heroic verse was originally spondaic.

[233] Iambic verse is the closest to prose, and in Horace's definition the iambs is a 'swift foot'.

[234] Axioms 61 and 62 allow us to conjecture that ideas and languages grew more agile in step with each other.

[235] Together with the general principles stated in Axioms 1–22, Axioms 47–62 cover the full range of poetic theory in all its parts: namely, myth, character and decorum, statement, style and stylistic vividness, allegory, song, and finally verse. Axioms 56–62 also demonstrate that in all nations speech in verse preceded speech in prose.

[236] Because of the senses, the human mind naturally tends to view itself externally in the body, and it is only with great difficulty that it can understand itself by means of reflection.

[237] This axiom offers us this universal principle of etymology in all languages: words are transferred from physical objects and their properties to signify what is conceptual and spiritual.
64

[238] The order of ideas must follow the order of institutions.

65

[239] Here is the order of human institutions: first forests, then huts, next villages, later cities, and finally academies.

[240] This axiom is an important principle of etymology. In recounting the history of words in various native languages, we must follow the sequence of human institutions. Thus, we observe that nearly the entire lexicon of Latin had sylvan or rustic origins. For instance, the noun lex, law, must originally have meant the gathering of acorns. From this, I believe, came ilex or illex, holm-oak. For just as aquilex means someone who gathers water, the ilex produces acorns, which ‘gather swine’ [as if ky lex, from Greek hys, swine, and Latin lex]. Later, lex meant the gathering of vegetables, which were therefore called legumes, leguminosa. Then, at a time when vernacular letters had not yet been invented for writing down laws, a necessity of civil nature caused lex to mean a gathering of citizens, or a public parliament. Hence, the presence of the people was the lex, law, that solemnized testaments, which was done when the assemblies were summoned, alatis comitis. Finally, the act of ‘gathering’ letters into bundles forming single words was called ligere, to read.

66

[241] People first sense what is necessary, then consider what is useful, next attend to comfort, later delight in pleasures, soon grow dissolute in luxury, and finally go mad squandering their estates.

67

[242] The nature of peoples is first crude, then severe, next generous, later delicate, and finally dissolute.

68

[243] In the human race there first arise monstrous and grotesque beings, like Polyphemus and the Cyclopes; then great-spirited and proud heroes, like Achilles; next, courageous and just men, like Aristides and Scipio Africanus; closer to us, imposing figures in whom images of great virtues are linked to great vices, and whom the masses hail as men of true glory, like Alexander and Caesar; still later, wicked and brooding men, like Tibullus; and finally dissolute and shameless madmen, like Caligula, Nero, and Domitian.

[244] As this axiom states, the first kind of people were needed to make individuals obey each other in the family state, and to prepare them to obey laws in the coming state of the city. The second kind, who by nature would not yield to their peers, were needed to establish aristocracies on the basis of the families. The third kind were needed to open the way towards popular liberty; the fourth, to introduce monarchies; the fifth, to consolidate them; and the sixth, to topple them.

[245] Axioms 65–68 offer us part of the principles of the ideal eternal history through which in time every nation passes in its birth, growth, maturity, decline, and fall.

69

[246] Governments must conform to the nature of the people governed.

[247] This axiom indicates that, by the nature of human civil institutions, the public school of rulers is the morality of the people.

70

[248] Let us make an assumption which does not contradict nature and which we shall later find true in fact. At first, a small number of the hardest people withdrew from the abominable state of the lawless world and founded families, with whom and for whom they placed fields under cultivation. Much later, many other people likewise withdrew and took refuge on the cultivated lands of these fathers.
[249] Native customs, especially natural liberty, do not change all at once, but only gradually and over a long time.

[250] Since all nations began with the worship of some deity, fathers in the family state must have been (1) the wise men who interpreted divine auspices; (2) the priests who offered sacrifice to procure the auspices, meaning to interpret them properly; and (3) the kings who brought divine laws to their families.

[251] According to a popular tradition, the first to govern the world were kings.

[252] According to another popular tradition, the first kings created were by their nature the worthiest.

[253] According to yet another popular tradition, the first kings were wise men. This is why Plato vainly yearned for those most ancient times when philosophers reigned as kings, or when kings philosophized.

[254] Axioms 72–75 show that in their persons the first fathers united wisdom, priesthood, and kingship. Kingship and priesthood, moreover, were dependent on wisdom, which was the popular wisdom of legislators, not the esoteric wisdom of philosophers. As a result, the priests in all later nations were crowned.

[255] According to a popular tradition, the first form of government in the world was monarchy.

[256] Axioms 67–76, and particularly the corollary to 69, show us that fathers in the family state must have exercised monarchical power which was subject to God alone. This power extended over the persons and property of their children, and to a greater extent over those of the family servants, famuli, who had sought refuge on their lands. This made them the first monarchs of the world. (We must interpret the Bible as referring to such men when it calls them patriarchs, which means 'ruling fathers'.) Throughout the Roman republic, their monarchical rights were guaranteed by the Law of the Twelve Tables, which says ‘The family father shall have the right of life and death over his children’, Patrifamilias in vita et necis in liberos esto. And it adds that ‘Whatever a son acquires, he acquires for his father’, Quotid filius acquirit, patri acquirit.

[257] According to their proper origin, the families can only have taken their name from the family servants, famuli, belonging to the fathers in the state of nature.

[258] Properly speaking, associates, socii, are people allied for their mutual advantage. The first associates in the world cannot be imagined or conceived before the appearance of the first refugees who fled to the first fathers in order to save their lives. These refugees were received by the fathers and, in exchange for their lives, were obliged to earn their living by cultivating the fathers’ fields.

[259] Such refugees were the true associates of the heroes. Later they
became the plebeians of the heroic cities, and eventually the provincial people of sovereign nations.

80

[260] People naturally enter a feudal system of benefices, beneficia, when they see that it maintains or increases their personal advantages: for these are the benefits, beneficia, one hopes to derive from civil life.

81

[261] It is a characteristic of the strong that they do not relinquish through cowardice what they have won by courage. Yet if it proves necessary or useful, they will gradually give up as little as they can.

[262] From Axioms 80–81 spring the perennial sources of fiefs, which Latin elegantly calls benefices, beneficia.

82

[263] Scattered throughout all the ancient nations we find clients and clientages, which are most aptly understood as vassals and fiefs. Indeed, erudite feudalists can find no apter Latin terms for the latter than clientes and clientelae.

[264] Axioms 70–82 reveal the origins of commonwealths, which were born of a crisis provoked by the family servile against the heroic fathers. This was a rebellion, described later in my Science, which caused the first commonwealths to be formed naturally as aristocracies. For when the servants rebelled, the fathers united themselves into orders to offer resistance; and then, as a united order, the fathers sought to placate the servants and restore them to obedience by granting them a kind of rustic fief. At the same time, the fathers found that their own sovereign family powers—which can be understood only as a sort of noble fiefs—were now subjected to the sovereign civil power of the new ruling orders. And the leaders of these orders were called kings, for as the most courageous they had led the fathers during the servant rebellion.

83

[265] The law regarding the fields is established as the world's first agrarian law. By its nature, no law more restrictive can be imagined or conceived.

[266] This agrarian law distinguished the three kinds of domain or ownership which are possible in civil nature, and assigned them to three classes of persons. The bonitary domain was assigned to the plebeians. The quinary domain was assigned to the fathers, since, being maintained by force of arms, it belonged to the nobility. And the eminent domain was assigned to the ruling order itself, which constitutes the lordship, or sovereign power, in aristocracies.

84

[267] There is a golden passage in Aristotle's Politics where, in his classification of commonwealths, he includes heroic kingdoms, in which kings administered laws at home, conducted wars abroad, and presided over the religion.

[268] This axiom tallies perfectly with the two heroic kingdoms of Theseus and Romulus, as the first is described in Plutarch's Life of Theseus and the second in Roman history. On such kings and the law, we may supplement Greek history with the Roman account of Tullus Hostilius administering the law in the prosecution of Horatius. As for
religion, the kings of Rome were also kings of sacred rites, and thus called *reges saeculum*. Later, after the kings had been driven out of Rome, the need to authenticate the divine ceremonies led the Romans to create a priest called the king of sacred rites, *rex saeculum*, who was the head of the herald-priests, or *fetiales*.

[269] There is another golden passage in Aristotle's *Politics*, which relates that ancient commonwealths had no laws for punishing private offences or righting private wrongs. He says that this custom is typical of barbarous peoples, since in their beginnings peoples are barbarous precisely because they are not yet civilized by laws.

[270] This axiom shows that duels and reprisals are necessary in barbarous ages, because they lack judicial laws.

[271] Golden as well is the passage in Aristotle's *Politics*, in which he says that in ancient commonwealths the nobles swore they would be the eternal enemies of the plebeians.

[272] This axiom explains the nobles' haughty, greedy, and cruel treatment of the plebeians, which is explicitly described in ancient Roman history. During this period, which was previously imagined to be an age of popular liberty, the patricians for many years overtaxed the plebeians, demanding military service paid at their own expense, and drowning them in a sea of usury. Then, when the wretched plebeians could not fulfil their obligations, the patricians locked them up for life in their private prisons, exacting payment from them in hard labour, and despotsically stripping them to the waist and caning them like ignoble slaves.

[273] Aristocracies are quite reluctant to go to war, lest the plebeian masses grow warlike.

[274] This axiom is the principle of justice in the Roman army until the age of the Punic Wars.

[275] Aristocracies keep wealth within the order of the nobles, since it contributes to their power.

[276] This axiom is the principle of the Roman policy of clemency in victory. The Romans deprived conquered peoples of their arms alone, and granted them bonitary ownership of all else, only obliging them by law to pay a reasonable tribute. This axiom also explains why Roman patricians resisted the agrarian reforms of the Gracchi: they did not want the plebeians to grow wealthy.

[277] Honour is the noblest stimulus to military valour.

[278] Peoples will conduct themselves heroically in war, if in peacetime they contend with each other for honours, some to retain them, others to win merit by attaining them.

[279] This axiom is the principle of Roman heroism from the expulsion of the kings to the age of the Punic Wars. In this period, the patricians naturally sacrificed themselves to save their country, since it in turn safeguarded all the civil honours of their order. The plebeians in turn performed distinguished exploits to show that they merited patrician honours.

[280] The contentions between urban social orders seeking equal rights are the most effective means of making commonwealths great.

[281] This is the second principle of Roman heroism. Such heroism was attended by three public virtues: the plebeians' highmindedness in
seeking to gain civil rights by means of the patricians' laws; the patricians' fortitude in keeping the rights within their order; and the wisdom of the jurists in interpreting the laws and extending their benefits as new cases came to trial. These are the three intrinsic reasons by which Roman jurisprudence distinguished itself in the world.

[282] Axioms 84—91 place ancient Roman history in proper perspective. The next three are also partly relevant to this.

92

[283] The weak want laws; the powerful reject them. The ambitious promote laws to gain adherents. Rulers protect the laws in order to make the powerful equal to the weak.

[284] The first two clauses of this axiom are the torch that ignites heroic contentions in aristocracies. For the nobles wish to keep all the laws secret within their order, so that they are dependent on their will, and may be administered by their royal hand.

These three causes are cited by the jurist Pomponius when he relates that the Roman plebeians demanded the Law of the Twelve Tables because they were oppressed, in their phrase, by 'secret, uncertain law and regal might', tuus latens, incertum et manus regia. And this axiom would also explain why the patricians were reluctant to grant the Twelve Tables to the plebs, and alleged that 'the customs of the fathers must be preserved, and no new laws enacted', mores patrios servandos, legis feri non oportere. Now, this is recorded by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who is better informed than Livy about Roman institutions. For he wrote his history with information supplied to him by Marcus Terentius Varro, who was hailed as the most learned of the Romans. And Dionysius is diametrically opposed to Livy, who relates that the nobles, in his words, 'did not spurn the plebeians' desires', desideria plebis non asperrami.

In my Principles of Universal Law, I noted this and other greater contradictions, which reveal the sharp opposition between these two authors, who were the first to record this myth about the Twelve Tables — nearly 500 years after they were framed! The discrepancies are so great that it is better not to believe either of them — especially when in the same age this myth was not believed by Varro himself, who in his Divine and Human Institutions derives all of the Romans' divine and human institutions from native origins. Nor was it believed by Cicero in his dialogue On the Orator. In the presence of Quintus Mucius Scaevola, the foremost jurist of the age, Cicero has the orator Crassus say that the wisdom of the decemvirs far surpassed that of Draco and Solon, who gave laws to the Athenians, and that of Lycurgus, who gave them to the Spartans. This is tantamount to saying that the Law of the Twelve Tables was not brought to Rome from either Athens or Sparta.

I think my view is closer to the truth. Even in Cicero's day, this myth was all too widely accepted by learned men, born as it was of the conceit of scholars, who assign the wisest origins possible to their own wisdom. We may infer this from the words of Crassus himself, who says 'Let them all grumble; I shall say what I think', Fremant omnes: dicam quod sentio. We see that Cicero had a precise motive for having Scaevola speak only on the first day of the dialogue. He wished to forestall critics who might object to an orator discussing the history of Roman law, a subject which lay in the competence of jurists, whose profession was then distinct from that of orators. In this way, if Crassus had said anything wrong on the subject, Scaevola would certainly have reproached him. And Pomponius relates that Scaevola in fact reproached Servius Sulpicius, who also takes part in Cicero's discussion, telling him that 'it is disgraceful for a patrician to be ignorant of the law which it is his business to know', parce esse patricio viro ius, in quo versetur, ignorare.

[285] Even more than Cicero and Varro, Polybius offers irrefutable evidence for not believing either Dionysius or Livy. Without question, Polybius both knew more about politics than these two, and lived some 200 years closer to the decemvirs. Beginning in Book 6 of his History (I use Jakob Gronov's edition), Polybius pauses to examine the constitutions of the most famous free commonwealths of his day. He observes that the Roman constitution differs from those of Athens and Sparta, but more from the former. (Yet scholars who equate Attic and Roman law insist that the popular freedom established by Brutus was regulated by laws imported from Athens, not from Sparta!) By contrast, Polybius notes the similarity between the Roman and Carthaginian constitutions.
But no one has ever imagined that the freedom of Carthage derived from Greek laws. This was so far from true that a law at Carthage expressly forbade the Carthaginians to learn Greek! And how can it be that such an insightful writer on commonwealths does not even make a quite natural and obvious observation, or investigate the cause of this discrepancy? In other words, how can the Roman and Athenian states be different if they are ordered by the same laws? And how can the Roman and Carthaginian states be similar if they are ordered by different laws? To absolve him of such a gross oversight, we are forced to conclude that in Polybius’ day no one at Rome had yet invented the myth that Greek laws were brought there from Athens to order the free popular government.

[286] The second part of this axiom opens the path by which ambitious men in popular states may rise to become monarchs. They do this by encouraging the natural desire of the plebeians who, in their ignorance of universal principles, seek laws for every particular case. Thus, when Sulla, head of the patrician party, had defeated Marius, head of the plebeian party, and was reorganizing the popular constitution with an aristocratic administration, he remedied the proliferation of laws by instituting the tribunals known as standing courts of inquiry, *quaestiones perpetue*.

[287] The third part of this axiom reveals the hidden reason why Roman emperors beginning with Augustus made countless laws for private cases, and why sovereigns and powers everywhere in Europe adopted the corpus of Roman civil and canon law in their kingdoms and free republics.

[288] In democracies, the door to civil honors is by law open to the greedy masses who rule. Hence, in peacetime men can only contend for power by arms rather than by law, and will use their powers to make laws that enrich them: witness the agrarian laws of the Gracchi at Rome. This results in civil wars at home and unjust wars abroad.

[289] Conversely, this axiom proves that the Romans were heroic in the period before the Gracchi.

[290] We defend our natural liberty most fiercely to preserve the goods most essential to our survival. By contrast, we submit to the chains of civil servitude to obtain external goods which are not necessary to life.

[291] The first part of this axiom is a principle basic to the natural heroism of the earliest peoples. The second part is a natural principle of monarchies.

[292] At first, people desire to throw off oppression and seek equality: witness the plebeians living in aristocracies, which eventually become democracies. Next, they strive to surpass their peers: witness the plebeians in democracies which are corrupted and become oligarchies. Finally, they seek to place themselves above the laws: witness the anarchy of uncontrolled democracies. These are in fact the worst form of tyranny, since there are as many tyrants as there are bold and dissolute persons in the cities. At this point, the plebeians become aware of their ills and as a remedy seek to save themselves under a monarchy. This is the ‘natural royal law’ which Tacitus invokes to legitimize the Roman monarchy of Augustus, ‘who placed under his supreme authority a nation exhausted by civil wars, claiming the title of First Citizen’.

[293] When the first cities were formed from families, the lawless liberty of the nobles caused them to resist any checks and burdens: witness the aristocracies in which the nobles rule as lords. Later, when the plebeians had become numerous and grown warlike, the nobles were obliged to bear the same laws and burdens as the plebs: witness the nobility in democracies. Finally, to safeguard their easy lives, the nobles were naturally inclined to submit to a single ruler: witness the nobility under monarchies.

[294] Together with Axioms 66–94, Axioms 95 and 96 are principles of the ideal eternal history mentioned above.
[295] We may reasonably postulate the following. After the flood, people first lived in the mountains; somewhat later, they descended to the plains; and finally, after many years, they felt safe in migrating to the sea-coast.

98

[296] Strabo cites a golden passage from Plato, in which he describes humankind after the local floods of Ogyges and Deucalion. First, when people lived in mountain caves, Plato identifies them with the Cyclopes, whom he also regards as the world’s first family fathers. Later, when they lived on the mountain slopes, he associates them with Dardanus, who built the city of Pergamum that later became the citadel of Troy. Finally, when they lived in the plains, he connects them with Ilus, by whom Troy was moved to the coastal plain and for whom it was renamed Ilium.

99

[297] According to an ancient tradition, Tyre was first founded inland and later moved to the coast of the Phoenician sea. And it is historically certain that the city was transferred from the shore to a nearby island, which Alexander the Great later reconnected to the mainland.

[298] Axioms 97–99 reveal that inland nations were founded first, and maritime nations later. They also offer an important proof of the antiquity of the Jewish people. For since the Jewish nation was founded by Noah in Mesopotamia, which is the region farthest inland of the early habitable world, it must have been the most ancient of all nations. This is confirmed by the fact that the first monarchy was also established in Mesopotamia, the kingdom of the Assyrians over the Chaldaean people, who produced the world’s first wise men, and first among these Zoroaster.

100

[299] People will abandon for ever their native lands, which are naturally dear to them, only when driven by the ultimate necessity of survival. And they will leave them temporarily only from their greed to grow rich by trade, or from their jealousy in protecting their gains.

[300] This axiom is the principle of the migrations of peoples. It is based on the heroic maritime colonies, on the waves of invading barbarians (which are the only ones discussed by Wolfgang Lazius), on the last recorded Roman colonies, and on the European colonies in the Indies.

[301] This same axiom shows that the lost races of Noah’s three sons must have been dispersed by their own bestial wandering. In this state, they fled from wild animals, which must have been very abundant in the world’s great forest; they pursued shy and intractable women, whom this savage condition must have made extremely timid and fearful; and they searched for pastures and water. As a result, they found themselves scattered throughout the world at that moment when the heavens first thunders after the flood—an event which explains why every pagan nation began with its own Jupiter, the god of thunder. For if, by contrast, these lost races had remained civilized like God’s chosen people, they too would have remained in Asia. Given the vastness of the continent and the scarcity of people in that age, they had no necessary reason for abandoning it; for people are not naturally accustomed to abandon their native lands from caprice.

101

[302] The Phoenicians were the first navigators of the ancient world.

102

[303] Nations in their barbarous stage are impenetrable. They must either be invaded from outside by wars, or they must voluntarily open themselves to foreigners from within, seeking the benefits of trade. For example, Psammeticus opened Egypt to the Ionian and Carian Greeks, who became famous as sea merchants after the Phoenicians. These same
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Greeks used their great wealth to build two of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: the Temple of Samian Juno in Ionia, and the Mausoleum of Artemisia in Caria. And the glory of this trade later passed to the inhabitants of Rhodes, who built the Colossus of the Sun, another of the Seven Wonders, at the mouth of their harbour. In the same way, the Chinese have recently opened China to our European merchants, seeking the benefits of trade.

[304] Axioms 100—102 give us the principle for a new etymological dictionary which, by treating words with a clearly foreign origin, differs from the dictionary for native words which I mentioned earlier. Besides word origins, it can trace the history of nations which succeeded each other in colonizing foreign lands. For example, Naples was first called Sirena, siren, which is a Syrian word: this indicates that Syrians, meaning the Phoenicians, were the first to establish a colony there for commercial purposes. Later, Naples was called Parthenope, or virgin sight, in heroic Greek, and finally Neapolis, or new town, in vernacular Greek — names which prove that the Greeks arrived there subsequently to establish trading posts. This history produced a language mixing Phoenician and Greek elements, which is said delighted the emperor Tiberius more than pure Greek. In precisely this way, on the Gulf of Taranto there was a Syrian colony called Siris, whose inhabitants were called Sirites. Later, the Greeks called it Polieion, from which derived the epithet Polias given to the Minerva worshipped in the local temple.

[305] Axiom 102 also gives a scientific foundation to Pietro Francesco Giambullari's thesis that the Tuscan language derived from Syriac. This language could only have descended from the earliest Phoenicians, who were the ancient world's first navigators, as Axiom 101 states. Later, this honour belonged to the Carian and Ionian Greeks, and eventually it passed to the merchants of Rhodes.

103

[306] The Greeks must have founded an early colony on the coast of Latium, which was later conquered and destroyed by the Romans, so that it lies buried in the darkness of antiquity. This postulate must necessarily be granted.

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[307] Without this postulate, anyone who studies and reflects on antiquity will be baffled by Roman history when it refers to the presence in Latium of Hercules, Evander, Arcadians, and Phrygians, and when it describes Servius Tullius as a Greek, Tarquinius Priscus as the son of Demaratus of Corinth, and Aeneas of Troy as the founder of the Roman people. Now, it is true that Tacitus notes a resemblance between Roman and Greek letters. But in Livy's opinion, the Romans in Servius Tullius' day had not yet heard the famous name of Pythagoras, who was then teaching in his renowned school at Croton. Instead, they only began to encounter the Greeks in Italy on the occasion of the war with Tarquinum, which later led to the war with Pyrrhus and the Greeks across the sea.

104

[308] In a noteworthy simile, Dio Cassius [Dio Chrysostom] says that custom is like a king, and law like a tyrant. By which he must mean reasonable custom, and law which is not inspired by natural reason.*

[309] The implications of this axiom decide the great debate 'whether law exists in nature or in human opinion', which is the same question posed in the corollary to Axiom 8: 'whether human nature is sociable'. For the natural law of nations was established by custom, which Dio compares to a king commanding by pleasure — rather than by law, which Dio compares to a tyrant commanding by force. This natural law was born of human customs which spring from the common nature of nations, which is the universal subject of my Science. And this natural law preserves human society: for there is nothing more natural, because more pleasing, than observing natural customs. Consequently, human nature, which is the source of human customs, is sociable.

[310] Taken together, Axioms 8 and 104 show that humankind is not unjust by its absolute nature, but only by its fallen and weak nature. Consequently, they prove the first principle of the Christian religion, which is Adam in the perfect image in which God created him. Hence, they also demonstrate the following Catholic principles of grace. Grace

* Vico mistakenly attributes this aphorism of Dio Chrysostom to Dio Cassius.
operates in man to remedy his privation, rather than negation, of good works: since man’s potential for good works is inefficual, grace must add its efficacy. But grace can act only in the presence of free will, which God’s providence naturally aids, as Axiom 8 states; and in this, Christianity agrees with all other religions. It is on this foundation that Hugo Grotius, John Selden, and Samuel Pufendorf should have constructed their systems. In this way, they would have agreed with the Roman jurists, who define the natural law of nations as established by divine providence.

105

[311] The natural law of nations arose together with the customs of the nations. Such customs conform to a human common sense, which occurs without any reflection and without any imitation between nations.

[312] Together with Dio’s simile, Axiom 105 establishes that providence, as the sovereign ruler of human affairs, ordains the natural law of nations.

[313] The same axiom establishes the distinctions between the natural law of the Jews, the natural law of nations, and the natural law of the philosophers. The pagan nations had only the ordinary help of providence. The Jews had also the extraordinary help of the true God, which is why they divided the world of nations into Jews and pagans. And the philosophers with their reason conceive a more perfect natural law than the nations practice in their customs. For philosophers only appeared some 2,000 years after the foundation of the pagan nations. The three systems of Grotius, Selden, and Pufendorf fail to note these three distinctions, and must therefore collapse.

106

[314] Sciences must begin at the point where their subject matter begins.

[315] This axiom is placed here as applying to one particular subject, the natural law of nations, but it applies universally to all the subjects treated in my Science. Although it properly belongs among the more general Axioms 1–22, I place it here because its truth and importance are revealed by this particular subject more than any other.

107

[316] The earliest clans, gentes, originated before the cities, and were called by the Romans the greater class, gentes matrones, meaning their ancient noble houses. From these, Romulus assembled the fathers of the senate, and with the senate, the city of Rome. By contrast, the new noble houses founded after the cities were called lesser clans, gentes minores. After the expulsion of the kings, Junius Brutus enrolled fathers from these new houses to replenish the senate, which had been nearly depleted by the deaths of senators executed by Tarquinius Superbus.

108

[317] Gods were divided accordingly into those of the greater clans and those of the lesser clans. The gods of the greater clans were those consecrated by the families before the founding of cities. Among the Greeks and Romans, they clearly numbered twelve; and I shall show later that the same number existed among the early Assyrians or Chaldeans, Phoenicians, and Egyptians. Indeed, the number of the gods was so familiar to the Greeks that they were simply referred to by the word ἰδιοκτέω, the Twelve. All twelve gods are named confusingly in a Latin distich of Lucilius, which I cited in my Principles of Universal Law. But in Book 2 of my Science, I follow the natural theogony, or genealogy of the gods, which naturally formed in the minds of the Greeks, and list them in this order: Jupiter, Juno, Diana, Apollo, Vulcan, Saturn, Vesta, Mars, Venus, Minerva, Mercury, and Neptune. By contrast, the gods of the lesser clans were those consecrated later by peoples living in cities; for example, Romulus, who after his death was called the god Quirinus by the Roman people.

[318] Axioms 106–8 show that the three systems of Grotius, Selden, and Pufendorf are based on faulty principles. For they begin with nations considered within the society of the entire human race. But I shall
show that the human race in all the first nations originated in the age
of the families and under the gods of the greater clans.

109

[319] People with limited understanding regard the law as only what
its words express.

110

[320] Ulpian gives a golden definition of civil equity. He calls it ‘a kind
of probable judgment, not naturally known to everyone’ — and thus
distinct from natural equity — ‘but only to those few whose prudence,
experience, and learning have taught them what things are necessary
to preserve human society’. In good Italian, we call this *region di stato*,
the reason of state.

111

[321] What is certain in laws is a dark area of legal reasoning which is
enforced by authority alone. This is why we often find laws harsh in
their application. Still, we are obliged to apply them because they are
certain, for *certum* in good Latin means particularized, or individuated,
as the Scholastics say. Hence, in extremely elegant Latin, *certum*, certain,
and *commune*, common, are antonyms.

rule is civil equity, which relies on what is *certain*, meaning the limited
particularity of legal wording. Hence, barbarous peoples, who can
conceive only particular ideas, are naturally satisfied by civil equity, and
consider it their due. In this context, Ulpian says, ‘The law is harsh,
but it is written.’ But in better Latin and with greater legal elegance,
we might say, ‘The law is harsh, but it is *certain*.’

117

[323] Intelligent people regard the law as the principle of equal benefit
to all parties.

113

[324] The truth in laws is a sort of light or splendour which illuminates
their natural reason. This is why jurists often say ‘it is true’, *verum est*,
for ‘it is just’, *aequum est*.

[325] The definitions of Axioms 111 and 113 derive from Axioms
9–10, which define what is true and certain in general terms. Because
they apply general definitions to the particular subject of the natural
law of nations, these axioms will prove useful throughout my New
Science.

114

[326] Natural equity, as conceived by the fully developed human reason,
is the practical application of wisdom to what is useful. For wisdom in
the broadest sense is merely the science of making natural use of things.

[327] Axioms 112–14 constitute the principle of *generosus construction*.
Its rule is natural equity, which is a natural element of civilized nations.
This is the public school from which philosophers emerged.

[328] Axioms 109–14 confirm that providence ordained the natural
law of nations. For many centuries, nations had to live in ignorance of
truth and natural equity, until the latter was explained by philosophers.
During this time, providence allowed them to adhere to certainty and
to civil equity, which scrupulously safeguards the wording of decrees
and laws. In this way, the nations observed the letter of the law even
when it proved harsh, and thus managed to preserve themselves.

[329] The three great proponents of the natural law of nations —
Grotius, Selden, and Pufendorf — were ignorant of the principles stated
in Axioms 109–14. As a result, all three of them erred together in
laying the foundations of their systems. For they believed that natural
equity in its perfect form was understood by the pagan nations from
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the very beginning. But they failed to reflect that philosophers only appeared some 2,000 years after the founding of these nations. And they failed to give special consideration to the particular assistance which a single people, the Jews, received from the true God.

SECTION 3
PRINCIPLES

[330] Let us test the propositions enumerated as Elements of my New Science, and see whether they can give form to the matter outlined in the Chronological Table. I ask the reader to review what others have written about the principles in any field of pagan antiquity, whether human or divine, and to see whether it conflicts with any of my propositions, either singly or as a whole. (In fact, since all my propositions are in harmony, whatever conflicts with one of them will conflict with the rest.) I am certain that, on making this comparison, the reader will find that their writings are merely clicheé based on confused and misplaced memories,* and the fancies of disordered imaginations, without any true understanding: since this has been impaired by the two conceits described in Axioms 3 and 4. Thus, the conceit of the nations, who each assert their primacy in the world, discourages our hopes of discovering the principles of this Science in the philologists. And the conceit of scholars, who claim that what they know was clearly understood at the beginning of the world, makes us despair of discovering these principles in the philosophers. In our inquiry, then, we must proceed as if there were no books in the world.

[331] Still, in the dense and dark night which envelops remotest antiquity, there shines an eternal and inextinguishable light. It is a truth which cannot be doubted: The civil world is certainly the creation of humankind. And consequently, the principles of the civil world can and

* Vico's expression luoghi di una fusa memoria evokes the theory that the memory assigns ideas to certain places.
must be discovered within the modifications of the human mind. If we reflect on this, we can only wonder why all the philosophers have so earnestly pursued a knowledge of the world of nature, which only God can know as its creator, while they neglected to study the world of nations, or civil world, which people can in fact know because they created it. The cause of this paradox is that infirmity of the human mind noted in Axiom 63. Because it is buried deep within the body, the human mind naturally tends to notice what is corporeal, and must make a great and laborious effort to understand itself, just as the eye sees all external objects, but needs a mirror to see itself.

[332] Now, since the world of nations is the creation of humankind, let us see in what institutions all the human race agrees and has always agreed. From these, we may derive principles which, like those of every science, are universal and eternal, and on which all nations are founded and maintain themselves.

[333] We observe that the barbarous and civilized nations of the world, despite their great separation in space and time and their separate foundations, all share these three human customs: all have some religion, all contract solemn marriages, and all bury their dead. And in every nation, no matter how savage and crude, no rites are celebrated with more elaborate ceremonies or more sacred solemnities than those of religion, marriage, and burial. Now, according to Axiom 13, whenever uniform ideas originate among peoples unknown to each other, they must have a common ground of truth. Hence, all the nations must have grasped that these three institutions are the origin of all civilizations, and hence that they must be guarded religiously. For otherwise, the world would return to a brutish state and again become a wilderness. This is why I have adopted these three eternal and universal customs as the three first principles of my New Science.

[334] Let no present-day travellers denounce these principles as false. They may relate that tribes of Brazil, the Kaffirs of Africa, and other peoples of the New World live in society without any knowledge of God; and Antoine Arnauld says the same of the inhabitants of the Antilles. It may have been such writers who induced Pierre Bayle to affirm in his treatise on comets that people can live in justice without the light of God. (Even Polybius dared not claim as much in his

acclaimed dictum that, if there were philosophers who lived in justice through reason rather than laws, the world would need no religions.) But these are tales told by travellers who hope that such exotics will help them peddle their books. Their view is shared by Andreas Rüdiger in his pompously titled Divine Physics, which he subtitled the only path between atheism and superstition. But even in the free and popular Genevan republic, where writers enjoy greater freedom, Rüdiger was rebuked for this opinion by the censors of the University of Geneva, who charged that he wrote with too much assurance — in other words, with considerable audacity.

In fact, all nations believe in a provident deity. Yet in all of past history and the entire world of civilization, we can find only four primary religions. First is the religion of the Jews. Second is the religion of the Christians, which derives from the first. Both of these believe in a single deity which is a free and infinite spirit. Third is the religion of the pagans, who believe in the divinity of several gods, which they imagine as made up of body and free spirit. This is why pagans refer to the divine powers that rule and preserve the world as the immortal gods, deos immortales, in the plural. Fourth and last is the religion of the Mohammedans, who believe in the divinity of a god who is an infinite and free spirit in an infinite body. And as their reward in the next life, they expect pleasures of the senses.

[335] No nation has ever believed in a god which is purely body, or in a god which is purely spirit but not free. This is why the Epicureans, whose God is merely a body subject to chance, could not reason about commonwealths and laws; nor could the Stoics, who resemble the followers of Spinoza in making God an infinite spirit, subject to fate, in an infinite body. And Benedict Spinoza discusses the commonwealth as if it were a society of shopkeepers. Cicero was right, then, when he told his Epicurean friend Atticus that he could not discuss laws with him unless he granted the existence of divine providence. This shows us how compatible the Stoic and Epicurean sects are with Roman jurisprudence, which posits divine providence as its first principle!

[336] As for the principle of marriage, some believe that, when free men and women engage in sexual relations without solemn matrimony, as sometimes happens in fact, they commit no wrong under the law of
nature. But all the nations of the world reprove this opinion as false by their civilized customs. On the basis of these customs, they all celebrate marriage religiously, and thus define illicit relations as a bestial sin, if in a minor degree. The reason is simple. Parents in such unions are joined by no legal bond, and soon forsake their natural children. Since the parents may separate at any moment, the children find themselves abandoned by both of them, and are exposed to be devoured by dogs. Then, if they are not adopted and raised by the public or private charity of a humane society, such children will grow up with no one to teach them religion, language, or any other civilized custom. Left to themselves, such orphans will turn the world of nations, enriched and embellished by the many fine arts of humanity, into the great ancient forest where Orpheus’ foul beasts, wandering in brutish and abominable error, practised the bestial intercourse of sons with mothers and of fathers with daughters. This incest is the execrable abomination of the lawless world. Socrates cited irrelevant biological arguments to prove that incest violates the law of nature. But incest in fact violates the law of human nature. For such relations are naturally considered abhorrent by all nations, and have only been practised by nations, like the Persians, in a state of advanced decadence.

[337] Finally, to appreciate the importance of my third principle, that of burial rites, let us imagine a brutish state in which human corpses are left unburied as carrion for crows and dogs. Such bestial behaviour clearly belongs to the world of uncultivated fields and uninhabited cities, in which people wandered like swine, eating acorns gathered amid the rotting corpses of their dead kin. This is why burials were rightly defined in a lofty Latin phrase as ‘the covenants of the human race’, foedera humani generis, and were characterized less grandly by Tacitus as ‘exchanges of humanity’, humanitatis commenia. Furthermore, all pagan nations clearly agree in the view that the souls of the unburied remain restless on the earth and wander around their corpses: which is to say, souls do not die with their bodies, but are immortal. We may regard this as the consensus of the barbarous nations of antiquity, for it is confirmed by what we read about today’s barbarous nations in various authors: the tribes of Guinea in Hugo van Linschoten, the peoples of Peru and Mexico in José de Acosta, the Indians of Virginia in Thomas Harriot, the Indians of New England in Richard Whitbourne, and the people of Siam in Joost Schouten. Hence, we may share Seneca’s conclusion: ‘When we discuss immortality, we must grant considerable importance to the consensus of mankind, who either fear or worship the spirits of the underworld. I follow this general belief.’
SECTION 4
METHOD

[338] To complete the establishment of the principles which I have adopted in my Science, it remains in this first book to discuss the method it should employ. And this Science must begin at the point when its subject matter began, as Axiom 166 states. Hence, if we heed the philologists, we must look backwards and seek it among the stones of Deucalion and Pyrrha, among the rocks of Amphion, and among the men born from the furrows of Cadmus or the hard oak of Virgil. And if we heed the philosophers, we must seek it among the frogs of Epicurus, among the cedars of Hobbes, and among the simpletons of Grotius. Or we must look among those men described by Pufendorf who were cast into the world without God's aid or care, grotesque savages like the giants called 'Big Feet' reported in Patagonia near the Strait of Magellan – which is to say Homer's Cyclopes, in whom Plato sees the first fathers of the family state. Such are the scientific origins of humankind which philologists and philosophers have given us!

Furthermore, we must begin our discussion at the point when these creatures began to think humanly. There was only one means of taming the monstrous savagery and bridling the bestial freedom of such creatures. This was the terrifying thought of some deity, which is the only means powerful enough to reduce savage liberty to dutiful behaviour, as Axiom 31 states. Yet as I sought to discover the manner in which this first human thought arose in the pagan world, I met with arduous difficulties which have cost me a full twenty years of research to overcome. For I had to descend from today's civilized human nature to the savage and monstrous nature of these early people, which we can by no means imagine and can conceive only with great effort.

[339] For all these reasons, we must begin with some notion of God that is found in even the most wild, savage, and monstrous people. We may show that this notion is the following. When people fall into despairing of any natural assistance, they desire something higher to save them. But only God is higher than nature, and this is the light which God has shed on all people. We find confirmation of this in a common human custom: as libertines grow old and feel their natural powers failing, they naturally turn to religion.

[340] Now, before they became the founders of the pagan nations, the earliest men must have thought in powerful surges of violent passion, which is how beasts think. So we must begin with the popular metaphysics mentioned in Axiom 33, which proves to be the theology of the poets. From this, we must seek that terrifying thought of a deity which imposed form and measure on the bestial passions of these lost men and made them human passions. Such a thought must have given rise to the moral effort, or conatus, which is proper to the human will and which restrains the impulses that the body urges on the mind. By means of this effort, such impulses can be completely suppressed by the sage, and can be directed to better ends by the good citizen.

Our control of bodily impulses is undoubtedly due to the freedom of the human volition, and thus to free will, in which all the virtues reside, including justice. When justice informs it, the will is the source of all that is just and of all the laws that justice dictates. To assign such conscious efforts to the body would mean granting them the freedom to regulate their motions. But in nature all bodies are agents of necessity. What in mechanics are called power, force, and conatus are the insensible motions which cause bodies to approach their centres of gravity (as ancient mechanics taught) or to recede from their centres of motion (as modern mechanics teaches).

[341] Because of their corrupt nature, people are tyrannized by self-love, and so pursue their own advantage above all else. Seeking everything that is useful for themselves and nothing for their companions, they cannot subject their passions to the conscious impulse that directs them to just ends. This leads us to establish the following principle. In his bestial state, a man loves only his own well-being.
After he takes a wife and has children, he continues to love his own well-being, and comes to love the well-being of his family as well. After he enters civil life, he comes to love the well-being of his city. After his city extends its rule over other peoples, he comes to love the well-being of his nation. And after such nations are united through war, peace, alliances, and trade, he comes to love the well-being of the entire human race. In all these contexts, the individual continues to love his own advantage above all else. Hence, it is by divine providence alone that the individual remains within these social orders, observing justice in the society of the family, of the city, and finally of humankind. Within these orders, when an individual cannot obtain the advantages he wants, he will seek instead the advantages which are his due: this we call his just portion. In this way, all human justice is governed by the divine justice which divine providence administers to preserve human society.

[342] In its first principal aspect, then, my New Science must be a rational civil theology of divine providence, which was previously lacking in philosophy. For some philosophers were completely unaware of the existence of providence. The Epicureans said that human affairs are set in motion by the blind collision of atoms, and the Stoics said that they are drawn along by an inexorable chain of causes and effects. And other philosophers merely considered providence within the order of natural things, calling their metaphysics a ‘natural theology’. While contemplating the providential aspect of God, they confirmed its existence through the physical order of nature, which they observed in the motions of physical bodies like the spheres and the elements, as well as in the final cause revealed in lesser natural phenomena.

By contrast, the philosophers should have discussed providence as revealed in the economy of civil institutions. This is clear from the proper meaning of the word ‘divinity’, which was applied to providence. This noun derives from the Latin verb divinari, to divine: in other words, to understand either what is hidden from men, meaning the future, or what is hidden within them, meaning their conscience. Properly speaking, then, divinatory providence is the first and principal part of the subject of jurisprudence, or divine institutions; while the second and complementary part of jurisprudence, or human institutions,

must derive from divinatory institutions. My New Science is therefore a demonstration, as it were, of providence as historical fact. That is, it must provide a history of the orders and institutions which providence bestowed on the great polity of humankind without the knowledge or advice of humankind, and often contrary to human planning. For although by its creation our world is temporal and particular, the orders which providence establishes in it are universal and eternal.

[343] The contemplation of infinite and universal providence offers us three divine proofs to confirm and demonstrate my Science. (1) Since omnipotence is its minister, divine providence introduces its orders into the world through easy paths, such as our natural human customs. (2) Since infinite wisdom is its counsellor, there is order in whatever providence disposes. (3) And since its final purpose is its own infinite goodness, what is ordained by providence always tends towards a good higher than what humankind proposes.

[344] Faced with the lamentable obscurity of the origins of nations and the innumerable varieties of their customs, we can desire no sublimer proofs about this divine source of all human institutions than the three just mentioned: its naturalness, its order, and its final purpose, which is the preservation of the human race. And these proofs appear even more distinct and luminous when we ponder them further. (1) Let us reflect on the ease with which institutions arise, and consider under what diverse conditions, often remote from each other and contrary to human proposals, they come into being and gain acceptance. Such proofs are granted us by divine omnipotence. (2) Let us compare various institutions and their order. We shall find that some may arise now in their proper time and place, while others must wait to arise with that timelessness in which, according to Horace, all the beauty of order consists. Such proofs are offered us by eternal wisdom. (3) Finally, let us see whether it is conceivable that under the same circumstances different divine benefits could have arisen which, by relieving men’s needs and ills, would have better guided and preserved human society. Such proofs are given us by God’s eternal goodness.

[345] My Science proposes a central and unitary proof of providence. By comparing and analysing a wide range of possibilities – as many as are permitted and permissible – we shall see whether the human mind
can conceive of any other causes, different in number or in kind, which could have produced the effects seen in the civil world. By following this argument, the reader will experience a divine pleasure while still in his mortal body; for in their divine and ideal form, he will contemplate the world of nations in all their great variety and extent. And the reader will find that he has shown the Epicureans that their chance cannot madly wander about escaping in all directions, and shown the Stoics that the eternal chain of causes, which they say shackles the world, is dependent on the omnipotent, wise, and generous will of God the Best and Greatest.

[346] We shall find that these sublime proofs of natural theology are confirmed by the three kinds of logical proofs. First, by reasoning about the origins of divine and human institutions in the pagan world, we arrive at their first beginnings, beyond which only foolish curiosity would attempt to go — which is the hallmark of first principles. Second, we shall explain the particular manner in which they arose, or what I call their nascence or nature — which is the hallmark of a science. Finally, we shall find confirmation of these proofs in the eternal properties which are preserved by human institutions and determined by their ‘nature’, meaning the time, place, and manner of their origins, as Axioms 14 and 15 state.

[347] In exploring the origins of human institutions, my Science rigorously analyses our human notions about what is necessary or useful, which are the two perennial sources of the natural law of nations, as Axiom 11 states. Hence, in another principal aspect, my New Science is a history of human ideas, which forms the basis for constructing a metaphysics of the human mind. Axiom 106 states that sciences must begin at the point when their subject matter begins. Hence, the queen of the sciences, metaphysics, began when the first men began to think in human fashion, and not when philosophers began to reflect on human ideas. (The latter notion is found in Johann Jakob Brucker’s recent Philosophical History of the Theory of Ideas, an erudite and scholarly little book which includes the latest controversies between the foremost geniuses of our age, Leibniz and Newton.)

[348] We must, then, determine the earliest times and places of this history: that is, when and where human thought arose. And we must gain certainty for these times and places by applying the appropriate chronology and geography, which might be called metaphysical. To this end, my Science applies a new critical art, similarly metaphysical, to the founders of the nations: for they must have lived more than a thousand years before those writers with whom previous criticism has dealt. And as a criterion, I have adopted the common sense of the human race, which (as Axiom 11 states) is taught by divine providence and is common to all nations. This common sense is determined by the necessary harmony of human institutions, which is the source of all the beauty of the civil world. Hence, the predominant proofs of my Science follow this form: given the orders established by divine providence, human institutions had to, have to, and will have to develop in the way described by my Science. (Nor would this change even if infinite worlds were to arise from time to time throughout eternity, which is certainly false in fact.)

[349] Thus, my New Science also traces the ideal eternal history through which the history of every nation passes in time; and it follows each nation in its birth, growth, maturity, decline, and fall. Now, according to the first irrefutable principle stated above, the world of nations is clearly a human creation, and its nature reflected in the human mind. Hence, I would venture to say that anyone who studies my Science will retrace this ideal eternal history for himself, recreating it by the criterion that it had to, has to, and will have to be so. For there can be no more certain history than that which is recounted by its creator. In this way, my Science proceeds like geometry which, by constructing and contemplating its basic elements, creates its own world of measurable quantities. So does my Science, but with greater reality, just as the orders of human affairs are more real than points, lines, surfaces, and figures. This is an indication that my proofs are divine and should afford my reader something like divine pleasure. For in God knowledge and creation are the same thing.

[350] If we adopt the definitions of truth and certainty proposed in Axiom 10, we see that for a long time the pagan peoples lived in ignorance of truth and reason, which are the source of that inner justice by which the intellect is satisfied. By contrast, this justice was practised by the Jews, for they were illuminated by the true God. (Indeed, his
divine law even forbade the Jews from thinking unjust thoughts—something no mortal legislator ever bothered about. For the Jews believed in a purely spiritual God who can read human hearts, but the pagans believed in gods composed of bodies and minds who were incapable of this.) Eventually, the philosophers reasoned about this inner justice, but they only appeared some 2,000 years after the founding of the nations. Hence, in the meantime the nations were governed by the certitude of authority, which is the criterion adopted by my metaphysical criticism. (This is humankind’s common sense, which is defined in Axiom 12, and on which the consciences of all nations repose.) Hence, in another principal aspect, my Science becomes a philosophy of authority, for this authority is the source of what moral theologians call outer justice. The three great proponents of natural law—Grotius, Selden, and Pufendorf—should have taken into account this authority, rather than the authority they drew from passages in early writers. For how could these writers have any awareness of the authority which reigned among nations more than a thousand years before they lived? Grotius, who is more learned and erudite than the others, attacks the Roman jurists on almost every particular point of this question. But he misses his mark, for the jurists established their principles of justice on the certainty of humankind’s authority, not on the authority of learned scholars.

[351] These philosophical proofs form the basis of my Science and are consequently essential to its purpose. By contrast, philological—historical proofs have only secondary importance, and may be assigned to the following categories.

[352] (1) Without being forced or distorted, my mythological interpretations agree directly, easily, and naturally with the institutions I discuss. We shall see that myths are the civil histories of the earliest peoples, who everywhere were poets by nature.

[353] (2) Second, when explained by the complete truth of their sentiments and by the complete propriety of their expressions, heroic statements also agree with these institutions.

[354] (3) The etymologies of native languages also agree with these institutions, for they trace the histories of the words which denote them. Such etymological histories begin with the meanings proper to their origins, and follow the natural progress of their metaphorical uses. This follows the order of ideas, along which the history of languages must proceed, as Axioms 17–18 and 64–5 state.

[355] (4) My Science illustrates the conceptual dictionary of human social institutions. As Axiom 22 states, all nations uniformly grasp the substance of the same institutions, but express them differently according to their different manifestations.

[356] (5) My Science attempts to sift the truth from falsehood in whatever popular tradition has preserved for many centuries. For as Axiom 16 states, popular traditions have been preserved for so many years by entire peoples because they have a public ground of truth.

[357] (6) The great fragments of antiquity were previously useless to science because they were squalid, mutilated, and dispersed. But once they have been cleaned, restored, and set in their proper place, they will shed new light on the past.

[358] (7) Finally, all the events we know from certain history may be traced to these institutions, which are their necessary cause.

[359] Such philological proofs concerning the world of nations allow us to see in reality the institutions we have contemplated as ideas. This follows the philosophical method of Bacon, which he calls ‘contemplating and seeing’, cognoscere cognitum. In this way, the authority of my philological proofs is confirmed by the reason of my philosophical proofs; and the reason of my philosophical proofs is confirmed by the authority of my philological proofs.

[360] To summarize, I have defined the three principles of my New Science as divine providence, the moderation of passions through marriage, and the immortality of human souls attested by burial. And I have adopted the criterion that whatever all or most people feel must be the rule of social life. (These principles and criterion are agreed on both by the popular wisdom of all legislators and by the esoteric wisdom of the most renowned philosophers.) These are the boundaries of human reason, and transgressing them means abandoning our humanity.